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planted at other times will spoil. Similarly, millet and maize must not be harvested during these periods, or small insects will eat the grain. "No crop whose root is used for food may be planted during the forbidden phases of the moon," say the educated cultivators also, citing experiences of their own or of their neighbors who, being skeptical, planted their potatoes or other tubers during the wrong phase of the moon, only to have them completely spoil. In some instances not only the phases of the moon, but entire months are held unpropitious for planting. Thus July is regarded as a "weak" month for planting potatoes and plantains, while April, May, June, and August are p[illegible]erred ones.

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As in all Negro cultures, the Haitians dare not ignore the supernatural powers that rule the universe, where the question of getting a living is concerned. In the valley of Mirebalais, if the land where a field is to be made has a stream, a cock must be sacrificed to the spirit that resides in it, together with oil, peas, and some non-intoxicating drink. In making the offering, protection is asked against those who might steal from the field or injure it:

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> "*Maitre Source, moin mandé pou' ou gadé jardin moin vini fait ici. Cé pas pou' ou laissé méchant, malfaiteur contrarié tout ça moin mété nan terr'a. Si moin bien récolté, moin va ba ou un pile mangé.* — Master of the Stream, I pray you to protect the garden I have just made here. Do not permit any evil designing person to harm all that I have put into the ground. If I harvest well, I will give you much food."

An invocation such as the following might also be pronounced on this occasion:

> "*Jesu Christ, les Saints, Marassa, les Morts: M'ap' travaillé; m'ap' planté graines-là. Pou' fai'l donné pou' moin, pou' m' join, pou' m' bai' Mystères, les Saintes, les Marassa, les Morts.* — Jesus Christ, Saints, Twins, the

> Dead: I have worked; I have planted this seed. Make it 241
> yield for me, that I may make offerings to the Mysteries, 782
> the Saints, the Twins, the Dead." 539

At the entrance to the field the cranium of a horse, a mule, 241
or a burro may be erected on a pole as magic against evil, and 789
a wooden cross to which limes are attached may also be raised to protect against any expression of envy that might place a spell upon the growing plants. Finally, if there is any reason to believe that evil magic may have been invoked against the owner, a *hungan*, or *vodun* priest is summoned to make a charm to ward it off, and, with a little ceremony, he inters this charm in the middle of the garden or at its entrance.

In addition to this, first fruits must be given as an offering 241
to the supernatural forces whose goodwill has permitted a 782
bountiful yield, particularly in the case of staple crops such as maize and rice. As the first heads of maize are brought in, they are roasted, and the kernels are cut from the cobs. The [823]
head of the household then throws them to the four cardinal
points either in the garden or before his house, and as he does [539]
this, he pronounces an invocation such as the following:

> "*Jesu Christ, les Saints, les Marassa, les Morts: M' jet' maï bai' ou, c'est pou' toujou' m' gagne bai' ou, et pou' m' gagne courai' pou' travai' a'c p'tit' moin, a'c femme moin, a'c parent' moin, a'c toute famille-a. Conserve m' pou' m' pas malade, pou' m' toujours join pou, m' bai' ou.*—Jesus Christ, the Saints, the Twins, the Dead: I throw maize for you, that I may always have some to give, that I may gain courage [strength] to work, and also my children, my wife, my relations, and all my family. Care for me that I do not fall ill, so that I may always have [something] to give you."

After this ritual the new crop is available to its owner for whatever use he may care to make of it.

241 782 The first of the rice-harvest is pounded in a mortar. A chicken is killed, or, if the farmer is a man of some means, he may offer two chickens, which are stewed together with red beans. The rice, cooked separately, is put on one platter or in a calabash and the stew in another, and these are taken to the field, where they are cast to the four quarters of the earth. Some of this is also given to the spirit residing in any stream [778] [824] which may be on the property. In addition, sacred trees are rewarded for their care over the field with some of this food placed at the foot of each, but only after they have demonstrated their merit by a successful yield. A prayer of thanks, [539] couched in terms such as these, is next pronounced:

> "*Tout ça quitté. Aidé moin à travailler durant l'année, quitté ba moin force, courage. Moin bien content jodi-a, main ça moin porté ba-ou, c'e pou' ca toujou' bon. Ba moin force l'année pou' moin travaille plus l'année prochain. Merci.* — All this remains [here for you]. Help me to work during the year, give me strength and courage. Today I am well satisfied; here is what I bring you that all may always be well with me. Give me strength this year that I may work more next year. Thank you."

The family and their friends who may be present then return to the house and eat the remaining food.

241 782 262 It is also held dangerous to eat yams until the spirits are given the first of the new crop that comes to hand.[1] This is true even though a person may not himself be a farmer, but purchases his yams in the market. Unless this is done: "*Cap' malade, cap' tué même. Marassa kèmbé 'ou, morts, too, et mystères.* — You can become ill, you can even die. Twins will seize (molest) you; the dead, too, and the *mystères.*" The ceremony occurs during November or December, and in addition to the "Guinea" yams — for this ceremony is not performed for the great coarse yams — it is necessary to have imported dried salt fish, fish from Haitian waters which are dried

in Port-au-Prince, native or "créole" rice, red beans, and 241
olive oil. The rice and beans are cooked separately, as are the 782
yams and the two kinds of salt fish, each being seasoned with 262
oil, salt, and pepper. The ordinary plates or calabashes on which food is offered the *loa*, or African deities, and the characteristic special double plates used in the twin cult, are prepared by rubbing them with olive oil. When the food is ready, it is placed in the proper containers in a closed room, and the family gather and say prayers of the Church — the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Credo — after which the *loa*, the twins, and the dead are called to come and eat. From midday until after sunset the room remains unopened, so that these beings may partake of the offerings placed there for them. Finally, when darkness has fallen, the family enter, and the food, whose essence is believed to have been consumed by the spirits, is eaten.

At times when a garden yields but little, the owner may 241
suspect that black magic is the cause. He thereupon tries to 789
recall any of his neighbors who might have occasion to feel envious of him, or those with whom he may have quarreled. He does nothing overt at this time except to watch for signs of hostility on the part of the suspect, but when the time for the next planting arrives, he not only obtains a strong charm to protect his own garden, but if he is particularly exercised and thinks his suspicions are well justified, he may set a countercharm in the field of his neighbor who he believes has harmed him. This would only be done in exceptional cases, where, for instance, the crops of one cultivator had failed when the fields about his had yielded well; for, in the main, garden magic is directed toward protective rather than toward malevolent ends.

A certain proportion of the harvest is reserved for use at 433
home and the remainder is sold in the markets. Since these 443
markets, which as the primary channel of distribution rank with farming in their importance in Haitian economy, they may next be considered.

other evil spirit or evil magic that may be directed against her. 843
If she is a worshipper of the African deities of the *vodun* cult, [751]
she may also ask the *vodun* priest to determine by divination
what spirit will protect the child, and what her own deity asks
to insure his aid. During all her pregnancy she is particularly
careful to avoid eating those foods which are "hateful" to
her — that is, which cause her to become ill — though in
Mirebalais, at least, it is not necessary that she refrain from
partaking of the foods "hateful" to her husband. A pregnant
woman has privileges and powers not shared with other [053]
women, as was evidenced when a Haitian man once appeared
with his eye half shut, explaining that the sty was a punishment
for his refusal to buy something his pregnant spouse had
coveted. "They do not always know they are sending you a
sty, but it is a power they have," he made clear.

Shortly before parturition is expected, both the pregnant 843
woman and her husband invoke the aid of the family deities 782
and make them offerings of a *couvert sec.*[*] The rite is an informal
one that need not necessarily take place in the familial
house of worship; if it is more convenient, it may be performed
inside their own house or in the courtyard. After re- 843
peating the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria, a prayer such as 782
the following is pronounced by the woman: 539

> "*Toutes mystères, tant pour papa que manman, du même de côté mari moin: m'ap mandé ou pou' moin fait un heureuse accouchement, pou' l'ouv'i chemin ba moin.* — All the gods, both of my father and of my mother, as well as those of my husband: I ask that you cause me to have a good delivery, that you open the road for me."

At the same time the family ancestors are not overlooked:

> "*Moin mandé nou' tous pou' nou' vini délivré moin, pou' nou' l'ouvri chemin pou' moin, pou' pas quitté*

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[*] The various types of offerings will be discussed in the next section of this book.

843 *malin esprit barré chemin qu'en moment delivrance*
782 *moin apé rivé. Nou' toutes Invisibles, les Saints, les*
539 *Morts, Marassa, ~~vini-assisté~~ moin jou'-a.*— I ask you all
to come deliver me, that you open the way for me, that
you do not allow evil spirits to bar mý path when the
time of the delivery approaches. May you all, Invisible
Beings, the Saints, the Dead, Twins, come to my aid on
that day."

843 Should one of the couple be a devotee of Damballa or Er-
782 zilie, both of them jealous gods, a chicken or two is added to
776 the customary offerings, and some gift pleasing to the god,
such as a dress or suit of his sacred color, is made him. Nor-
843 mally no further precautions need be taken. If, however, the
789 pregnant woman has had one or two miscarriages, she and her
(793) husband go to a *vodun* priest, preferably a woman, and obtain
a "medicine" to be used in bathing the abdominal and vag-
inal areas as a precaution against *mauvaises aires,* the were-
(755) wolves believed to consume children in the womb. If the preg-
nancy this time terminates successfully, some of the same
(793) medicine is rubbed on the child shortly after birth and several
times during the ensuing weeks, but should the infant later
fall ill, the *vodun* priest brings herbs and makes a smoke-fire
to drive away the werewolves that are believed still to be
hovering about.

844 At the onset of labor, if either the father or the mother of
782 the unborn child is vowed to Damballa, another sacrifice is
made to this god and to the spirits of twins, giving a *couvert sec* and one or two chickens and pigeons to each. If a *vodun* priest has determined what deity protects the child, a sacrifice is also given this spirit, and prayers are said to the spirits of twins, the dead of the families of both the man and the woman, and all other supernatural beings, saints of the Church and *vodun* gods alike.

844 Meanwhile the woman has been placed on the ground on

a mat or a cloth, supported in a reclining position with pillows 844
and cloths, or on a covered box standing about a foot from the
ground, with her legs drawn up. No fire is built in the house,
all doors and windows are tightly shut, and covers are provided
against a chill. A candle stands lighted at the threshold, [788]
and holy water is poured beside it; a candle is also often [782] ●
lighted in the church before the statue of the saint who corresponds
to the *vodun* deity under whose protection the woman
in labor is thought to be. In the room with her is the midwife
and as many as six, seven, eight, or nine older women belonging
to the families of the woman and her husband. The hands
of the woman are made to rest on her knees, but where labor
is prolonged, her arms are supported above her head to afford
relief. She is three times given very hot tea or a drink made of [757)
the stewed leaves of the mango tree and of the *bois lait*. The
midwife, with palm oil on her hands, watches the rhythm of
labor and presses on the abdomen to facilitate delivery.

If it becomes evident that this will be difficult, a *vodun* 845
priest is at once called to determine by divination whether or 793
not the deities who have been propitiated are satisfied. If the 787
answer is a negative one, he promises future sacrifices or gives 782
minor offerings immediately. Care is also taken to ascertain [775)
whether the trouble is due to the discontent of the family
dead who may have been angered by neglect to wear mourning
for them, or because sacrifices or a *service* due them have
been delayed too long. Inquiries are similarly made to determine [754)
whether the spirits of twins might not be displeased,
while the possibility that evil magic may have been invoked is
not overlooked, especially if the husband has several wives. If
the inquiry shows that the magic of a co-wife was responsible,
a strong counter-charm is made at once. Should the woman in 845
labor eventually die, however, her death is not considered to 766
be the result of any act of infidelity on her part, and does not,
as in other Negro cultures, prevent the usual burial and
mourning customs being carried out.

608 remembrances are expected from them on birthdays or saints' days, while the young person, when older, often brings his problems to them, knowing that they will give him their most disinterested advice. A man may turn to his godparents for aid before asking it of his family, for they are regarded as truest of friends. Nor does he stand in awe of them as he does of his older relations. There is a free joking give-and-take between godparent and godchild, which reflects this attitude of warm affection. A person even stands in a special relationship to the children of his godparents, calling them "baptismal 608 brothers" or "baptismal sisters." Among the peasants, though 582 not among the inhabitants of the larger centers, not only marriage but even those non-Church unions otherwise socially sanctioned are frowned upon between "baptismal brothers and sisters." And Mirebalais has it that when Church marriage is contemplated by two such individuals, special authorization from the Archbishop must first be obtained.[8]

851 852 608 Saturday is the day favored for baptisms, permitting as it does the child to be brought to town on a market day. The mother rarely attends, and usually the father is also absent when the godparents bring the infant to the baptismal font, where the priest gives him his name and receives him into the Church. Later in the day the parents are visited by their friends and relatives, who, if they can afford it, bring gifts for the child and partake of the drinks and refreshments that are provided.

851 852 782 Following the Church baptism at an interval which varies with differing circumstances, the father and mother and the godfather and godmother present the child to the family deities. Arriving at the family habitation the father says:

[539] "*Mystères-o, nou' même qui te après Grand Maître protège et delivre, moin vin' remercie nou'. Et en même temps main petite la pou' ga'dé pou' moin. Pas quitté mauvaise lesvou gagné l'empi' sou' li. Ba li force, santé,*

> *et preserve li cont'e tout mal. Ba li couraille pou' moin.* 851
> *Yun jou', c'est li-même qui allé remplacé nou' pou' servi* 852
> *nou' quan' nou' pas pè la.* — O spirits, you who after the 539
> Great Master protect and deliver, I come to thank you. 782
> At the same time here is the child [you are] to protect for me. Do not let werewolves gain power over him. Grant him strength, health, and preserve him against all evil. Give him courage for me. One day he himself will replace us to serve you when we are no longer here."

Inasmuch as it is always necessary to invoke all three categories 851
of supernatural beings, a similar invocation is pronounced for 852
the dead and the spirits of twins. The rite, however, may be 782
even simpler than this. If the family house of worship is near [764]
by, and the relationship group is one which numbers important members of the *vodun* cult, the child may be taken into this house, water thrown on the ground three times, and a candle lighted. In such cases no invocation is pronounced.

Most mothers nurse their infants until they are about eight- 862
een months old, though children may be weaned when as
young as a year. Weaning is accomplished in a day or two. On [824]
the day selected, a bitter plant called *laloi* is spread on the mother's breasts, and when the child asks and is given the breast and refuses it because of the bitter taste, his favorite food is at once offered as a substitute. So efficacious is this method that one day's training is ordinarily enough. As a further precaution the child is not allowed to sleep with his mother for three or four nights after being weaned, so that he cannot take the breast at night, and is only given a place in the mother's bed after her milk has ceased to flow.

The earlier years of a child are in the main free from care, 857
and, with due allowance for the differences in individual [855]
temperaments and family traditions, he is given much his own way. Young children make "mud food" and build play-houses. When somewhat older, they organize games of

584 truth, but the matter is recognized as one which concerns
836 only her husband and herself, and if he is willing to keep
836 her, it is his own affair. Consensus of opinion in Mirebalais
369 is that the percentage of girls who do not have pre-marital
sexual relations is relatively small, but the belief is expressed
that chastity is more prevalent among country women than
among those of the town, where, in turn, it is more frequent
than in larger centers such as Port-au-Prince. Even though
836 pre-marital relations are commonplace, however, the preg-
848 nancy of an unmarried girl is regarded as both reprehensible
and unfortunate, and she is severely beaten for it by her
family. In such cases, if the father of the unborn child will
take the girl, his parents are sent to bring her, but where the
parents of the man refuse to ask for the girl because they do
not approve of her, then, if he still desires her, he must him-
self face the anger of her parents. Should he not wish to come
for her, she may either remain with her family or seek work
in another community. In any event, her child will be well
cared for by her family, and no reproach will attach to it be-
cause of the circumstances of its birth.

585 Before a mating of any type is consummated, the familial
782 spirits must be notified of the approaching event so that they
may be well disposed toward it, for no union where this
776 is neglected can enjoy happiness or peace. One Mirebalais
woman was pointed out as an object lesson of the necessity of
doing this. Though a devotee of several gods, neither she nor
her husband was willing to perform the necessary rites for
her gods before their marriage. She was suffering from an
[753] acute case of melancholia after the birth of her first child, and
[828] the prevailing opinion was that she was going mad because
of the neglect of her duty toward her deities. Shortly before
a woman goes to her husband, therefore, a *couvert sec* for the
Rada deities is given both by herself and by her betrothed.
If the family of either the young man or the woman possess
deities of the powerful Pétro group, more inclusive offerings

are necessary, and the elders of the family must see to it that 585
these gods are instructed not to trouble the newly married 782 ●
pair. If either or both of them are devotees of deities such 776
as Damballa, Erzilie, Ogun, or Aida Wedo, all of whom are
known to be extremely jealous, these gods must be specially
placated.

For the actual ceremony the couple appear each with a 585
candle in hand, pour water on the ground in the family house 782
of worship, and kneel and pray. The god may "come to 787
the head" of the girl or the man or some relative of each and
advise them. If it asks a gift at this time, it is either given at
the moment or a promise is made to fulfill the request later.
If the spirit objects to the marriage, it is wooed with offerings.
Thus, for example, should the young woman be possessed
by the serpent-god Damballa, who, speaking through
his devotee, registered an objection to the marriage, the girl
would be given such gifts as a white silk dress, white silk
stockings, or some other valued object in the sacred color of
the god, or some perfume which might also serve to mollify
him. Or should the man's deity who registered objection be
Ogun, the god of war, a fine red kerchief might be offered [822]
in honor of this god, whose color is red.*

The dead of both families are also notified by means of a 585
visit to the cemetery. The days for these pilgrimages are Mondays 769
or Fridays, and the pilgrimages must be made during 782
either the morning or the early afternoon, since visits at night
are only for evil purposes. As candles are lighted, announcement
is made to the family dead of the marriage which is soon
to take place, and their good offices are asked to bring it happiness.
After all the family dead have been invoked, a candle is [776]
lighted before the large cross for Baron Samedi, and another
behind it for Gede, the first as the ruler of cemeteries and the
graves of the dead, and the second as his handy-man. Another
candle is lighted for the "abandoned souls" of the
family, who have died without consecration, and yet another

585 for the victims of smallpox. If family traditions also tell of
769 those shot, not in war, but as prisoners, perhaps, a candle is
782 lighted for them outside the cemetery wall. Though the
couple may perform this ceremony together, each makes this
request of the dead of his or her own family as the candles are
lighted. This call on the dead is repeated several days after
the marriage or later, when candles are again lighted.

591 The sole exception to the performance of these rites before
583 the new household is begun occurs in those cases of *plaçage*
585 where a girl continues to live at her own home. This is rare,
769 however, for the house of a man is usually built near that of his
father, and he takes his wife there. But if special circumstances
dictate otherwise, the ceremony of notifying and pacifying
the family deities may be deferred, though a man must eventually
present every woman with whom he lives to his family
gods and in turn must be presented to the gods of the woman's
family. In similar fashion the dead of both families must be
adequately notified.

585 Marriages rarely take place in the months of November
[777] and December, the former being disliked because it is "the
[796] month of the dead," during which All Saints' Day occurs, and
the latter because it ends the year. Except for the Church
[583] wedding and less elaborate festivities to celebrate the event,
the rites which mark a *plaçage* mating do not greatly differ
from those which mark a legal marriage, which may be described
[777] in outline. The favorite day for Church marriages is
Saturday, "the day of the Virgin," and the time for the ceremony
is always early morning, before the heat of the day has
set in. If the home of the girl is some distance from Mirebalais,
the party come to town the preceding day, the girl spending
the night with some friend. Otherwise the bridegroom, accompanied
by his relatives and friends, goes to the house of
the girl early Saturday morning. Before the couple leave the
[782] home of her parents, water must be thrown on the ground in
[788] front of them, and also sprinkled by them before the en-

trance of the house — three times if there is one door (for the 585
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), three times before each door 782●
if there are two entrances, and once before each door if there 788
are three. The wedding procession goes to church on foot.
The men, if they are from the countryside, are stiff, uncomfortable,
and hot in their unaccustomed " best " clothing and
their often painful shoes, while the women are also self-conscious
in their new dresses. The elaborateness of the ceremony [202]
varies with the fee paid the priest, but at all events
the clanging church bell is heard notifying the town and its
environs that a marriage is being consecrated.

If the family of the bride or groom are well known in
Mirebalais, a wedding reception may be given at their house
for friends of the couple and of their parents, but the real
festivities are held after the return to the new family home.
As the procession approaches it, the " bush-priest," a functionary [793]
who, because of his knowledge of French, can read the
prayers of the Church, waits at the gate with two aides, small
boys or girls, each with a flag, one red and one white. He has [778]
sacred water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other,
and as he pours this water on the ground three times he intones
the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Credo, and other
prayers. These concluded, hymns are sung by all the participants, [533]
and singing, a procession is formed with the " bush-priest "
in the lead, followed by the flag-bearers, the couple
who have just been married, arm in arm, the " godfather "
and " godmother " of the marriage, as the witnesses are called,
the parents of the bride and groom, and other close relatives.
As the procession reaches the door of the house, it pauses and
water is thrown on the ground three times; the circuit of the
house is made twice again, and each time, as the door is
reached, water is thrown, until, the third tour completed, the
participants solemnly enter.

There coffee, liqueurs, wine, *kola*, and cakes are served to 585
the principals and the more important members of the com-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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000 842 the phrase: "This is natural." Children are not spaced, for
163 normally a man resumes intercourse with his wife the second
833 or third month after childbirth. Except for the drinking of
coconut milk and salt, which is believed to be effective in
preventing conception if taken before intercourse, contraceptives
are not known to women, which means that pregnancies
162 follow in rapid succession. Families are not too large, how-
165 ever, despite this, those numbering seven or eight children
being rare, even in the hills. The reason for this is a high
incidence of infant mortality, which is obvious despite the
847 absence of vital statistics. Abortions are usually resorted to
by young women, who sustain the operation done by the
uncertain skill of an old woman, in the fear that bearing a
child will later stand in the way of a desirable legal marriage.
842 842 Some men, however, take the precaution of placing a grain
263 of native salt on the tongue while having intercourse during
an illicit affair, believing that this will be effective in preventing
conception.

842 A childless woman first goes to a *vodun* priest, to have him
789 determine by divination if a co-wife has not invoked magic
782 against her. If her question receives an affirmative answer, she
754 acquires a "counter-charm" to offset the effect of the other
595 woman's magic. Should such a charm be ineffective, she would
offer her prayers before the shrines of the saints and make
788 pilgrimages to such sacred places as Saut d'Eau, there phrasing
539 her petition to the Virgin in some manner such as the prayer
overheard as a woman lighted a candle and held it in her
hand before placing it on a sacred rock:

> *"Vièrge Miracles, Manman, voilà, depuis six ans depuis qui moins marié; moin apé vivre seul avec pauvre malhereux moin-a. Ça fait trois fois moin vini nan pié ou. Pas 'blié mandé moin fait ou, pour charité, moin ou petit pitite. Moin va minnin li ba ou. Moin apé parti, Manman, s' ou' pli, songé ça pitite m' mandé ou.—*

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Virgin of Miracles, Mother, I have been married for six years; I am still living alone with my poor unfortunate one. This is the third time I come to you. For charity's sake, do not forget to send me a child. I have brought this for you. Now I am about to leave [but], Mother, please think of the little one I ask of you."

Serpent-worship in Mirebalais

may perhaps be said to have come to this: Adherents of the 184
African cults refrain from killing the snake, and should they 771
do so by accident, the African custom of giving ceremonial 776
burial to any creature having supernatural importance is fol- 825
lowed as an atonement. Where this is omitted, difficulties of 782 ●
so serious a nature are felt to threaten that to prevent them a 766
priest of the cult is called upon to offer up a sacrifice and to beg forgiveness even after the little ceremony of burial has been performed.[7]

Inasmuch as *vodun* flourishes in Mirebalais despite the 771
minor role of serpent-worship, it is evident that in seeking to 171
understand its nature and its philosophy other aspects must 777
be considered. Two historical facts must be kept constantly in mind in making this analysis, for without them, what follows would be meaningless. The first is that *vodun* derives from a background of African theology and ceremonialism. The second is that the Negroes have continuously been subjected to the influence of Catholicism during the centuries that have passed since their introduction into the island.

Yet another point may prove suggestive in providing a use- 184
ful point of view for an analysis of the *vodun* cult. This bears 771
upon a difficulty impossible and happily unnecessary to resolve in the field study of religion, which arises out of the degree of variation in answers to questions dealing with the same point. These answers differ not only according to the status of the individual in the cult, since layman and priest have understandably different concepts of the functions of deities based on unequal degrees of expert knowledge, but the extent to which an individual has religious interests or is indifferent to them influences the nature of his responses. A fundamental fallacy results from the fact that except where there is an officially sanctioned theology — which makes for dogma, and often for perfunctory worship, in contrast with the living dynamic nature of Haitian peasant belief and ritual — there are no "real" answers to questions in the field of religion. The

787 776 the one possessed, possessions of this kind mean either that the *loa* needs baptism; or that, being baptized, its devotee has been negligent in serving the god.

796 776 794 No actual rite of baptism of a *loa* — or, as it is also termed, of *lavé tête,* "washing the head" — was witnessed, but the account of the ceremony given here, obtained independently from several persons, represents an adequate exposition of the rite as performed in Mirebalais. A room is prepared where the person whose *loa* is to be baptized must remain for three days. The mat or bed on which the neophyte rests is covered with fresh sheets and pillow-cases, and three changes of clothing are made ready, one of which must be entirely new for the last day of the ceremony. [822] These are in the color of the god being "baptized"; that is, if the *loa* were revealed to be such a one as Damballa, Aida Wedo, or Gran' Erzilie, everything would be white, but if it were Gran' Siligbo, the colors would be blue and white; if Ogun, everything would be red; if Ossange, blue; where the god is one of the Pétro suite, such as 'Ti Kita or Bosu, everything would be black.*

During the three days' "retreat" the one whose *loa* is being consecrated lies alone. All day long the men and women of the family sit in the next room or outside the house, singing and praying, though at night they sleep, since "this is not a wake." [533] They not only sing the songs sacred to the *loa* being baptized, but also the canticles of the Virgin, while prayers of the Church are recited under the leadership of the *prêt' savanne,* the "bush-priest" whose ability to read the prayers makes him an essential figure in all *vodun* rites. They may from time to time have "a little procession" about the room where the novitiate lies, when small banners in the color of the god are carried. ● [782] Soft drinks and a *mangé sec* — a "dry" offering — are given the god, and white tapers and an oil lamp are

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* A detailed listing of the names, attributes, and powers of the more widely worshipped *loa*, the colors, days, and trees or other places sacred to them, and the "squads" into which they are conceived to be formed, will be found in an appendix at the end of this book.

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lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god except 796 776 Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, [782] since it is said " the *loa* love desserts " — a commentary on the very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or " washing of the head," is performed [793] on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest [596] or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest. As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, [608] and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the [787] time, since, it is said, " one *loa* baptizes another." Leaves of [824] the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; [533] then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Possession [787] occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa* to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep through the night. A " ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may [527] celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the *loa*, after having been baptized, is " restrained " by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[13]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest [793] there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap-

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794 tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control
776 them. To have a baptized *loa,* then, merely means that the
[793] worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form.
The worshipper learns how to *marré,* or "tie,"[14] his spirit,
so as to enjoy the social aspects of a *vodun* dance without fear
● [782] that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings
from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family
is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals
that are staged.[15]

787 In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted"
776 by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wal,* or "horse." A
794 devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits
during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another. The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for
him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *mait' tête* — and
the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him.
[764] It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone
"taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned, all his other gods are under the control of this *mait' tête,* so that any agreement which he may enter into with this principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,[16] while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.[17] One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.[18]

787 Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of posses-
781 sion. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity
794 for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

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787 called upon to ask whether or not he is properly serving his
781 gods; is never placed in a situation for which possession would
[114] be a release. Hence to consider all possession as something
which falls within the range of psychopathology is to approach
it handicapped by a fundamental misconception.

787 The best evidence of the socially normal nature of possession
794 is the existence of rules governing its incidence which are
well understood by all. Not everyone who is a *ch'wal* may become
possessed at any dance or *service*, for the gods, if properly
under control, are permitted to come only to members of
the family giving the rite. At one *vodun* dance given by a
priest where a number of other *hungans*, present as guests, became
possessed, the host was regarded as having taken undue
advantage of his visitors by bringing on their possessions. In
another case Haitians from the southern peninsula who were
temporarily residing in Mirebalais carefully refrained from
contact with a certain *vodun* priest lest he bring on possession
by their gods. At one dance for the Rada gods, the *loa* Taureau,
a Pétro deity, possessed one of the drummers. Because
a Pétro *loa* was neither expected nor wanted, the man was
immediately removed and, when quieted, sent home. A similar
situation developed at another Rada dance where Bosu
" came "; the person possessed was at once taken outside the
enclosure until his god had left him. If a *loa* persists in dancing
at a *vodun* dance given by another family, it is either one of
these *loa bossal* already described, or a *loa vagabond,* and may
be scolded by the *hungan:* " You must not come here! You are
not wanted! Go home where you belong! " The passion with
[781] which a person resists his god when he feels possession coming
on at a rite not given by his own family is particularly instructive.
Men have been seen holding so tightly to the rafters of
the shelter under which the dance was being held that the
muscles of their forearms formed great cords, while beads of
perspiration rolled down their foreheads.[20] A person who
● [782] must live away from his family for a long time usually takes

steps to " feed " his *loa* in order to satisfy it, for it is more im- 787
portant to give offerings to the spirits than to dance for them. 782
He therefore either quietly prepares a sacrifice of cereals and 794
liquor in his own room or sends money home so that his *loa*
may be " fed " at the family habitation, and his absence ex-
plained to it.[21] 794

When *vodun* deities are discussed in Mirebalais, most often 776
two " companies " of them are mentioned, the Rada and the 178
Pétro " squads." In one list of gods that was obtained, the [192]
word *Rada,* derived from the name of the ancient principality [103]
of Allada in Dahomey, called forth the explanation " *qui veut*
dire Dahomey — which is to say, Dahomey," though it should
be made clear that neither the words *Rada* nor *Dahomey* are
any longer recognized in Haiti as place-names, being today
simply qualifying designations of *loa*. There are regional dif- [184]
ferences in the number and ranking of other categories of
gods that hold no important place in Mirebalais. The existence of these other categories is, of course, well known, and one person referred to " the seventeen and twenty-one classes of *loa,*" of which, however, only the following were named: Rada, Pétro, Dahomey, Guinée, Congo, Nago, Ibo, and Wangol. Of these the Congo and the Ibo gods are well known, though their worship is chiefly restricted to individual families, while the Nago and Dahomey categories, though significant from the point of view of indicating African origins, are most commonly grouped under the term *Rada*. Guinée also occasionally figures in worship as carried on in individual families, but this term is more often understood as a general designation for all *loa* outside the Rada, Nago, Congo, and Ibo groupings and for certain Pétro gods. Wangol derives from the geographical entity Angola.

From comparatively early times the impression has been 776
given that certain of these classes of gods perform only good, 794
and others evil. Nothing could be further from the truth than this attempt to read European concept into Haitian ideology,

776 for though some gods are feared far more than others, and
794 some generally regarded with affection, even these latter bring
great harm to a neglectful devotee, while the gods whose
power validates the most malignant magic may, in certain
situations, work for the good of their worshippers. Especially
has there been great confusion in discussions of the so-called
[114] Dom Pédro worship. Whether or not the origin of the term as
given by St. Mery is correct — that it derives from the name
of its founder, a Spanish Negro from Petit-Goâve[22] — the
statements that have been made concerning it are in the main
[782] misleading.[23] Thus, it is not true that the Pétro gods are unqualifiedly
evil and the Rada deities unqualifiedly good; nor
that blood sacrifices are made exclusively at Pétro ceremonies,
while the services for other gods are innocent of such sacrificial
776 offerings. The impression gathered in Mirebalais concerning
794 the Pétro gods is that they are principally, though not exclu-
769 sively, derived from the process of deification of powerful ancestors,
which in Africa exists in forms that clearly explain the
essential tradition that offers a basis for this custom as found
in Haiti. This is reinforced by statements to the effect that
most of the Pétro "squad" are Créole or native gods as
793 against the Guinée deities in the other groupings. One mem-
794 ber of the *vodun* cult, indeed, made the concept of deifying
776 the powerful dead explicit, saying that Pétro was a great and
769 evil *vodun* priest who had died with the *loa* not "taken from
[775] his head." For while a general principle in the cult of the
dead is that in the normal course of events those who die deliver
up their souls to God, making the care for these souls
primarily a concern of the Church, it is recognized that there
are others such as this Dom Pedro who become *loa*. This oc-
[764] curs when an individual, usually a priest or priestess of the
vodun cult, who during his lifetime was known to possess
great supernatural power, dies without having had his *loa*
[775] "withdrawn from his head." Burdened by these spirits, and
therefore unable to get to God, his soul goes to the bottom of

CHAPTER IX

VODUN WORSHIP: THE SERVICE

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[787]

THE *loa* make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect.[1] Fortunately, the wants of many of the gods are modest, and they are satisfied if a candle is occasionally lighted, some water " thrown away " in the place of worship, and they are kept informed of family happenings. But when the *loa* finally clamor for a sacrifice, the time when it is to be made is deferred until the necessary preparations can be completed, for the attitude of the Haitians toward the gods in such matters, as one explained it, is that " *Mystère c'est 'ti moun, faut les derigé* — The *loa* are like children, and must be told what to do," and " If the *loa* are promised a sacrifice, they must accept the date set by the one who serves them." But when that date arrives, the ceremony must be held or the *loa* will cause their worshippers much trouble. This does not mean that a poor person, or one who has met with reverses, may not plead with his god and count on being permitted to defer the offering if he is unable to provide what is asked.

employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instruments are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi*, who join the massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most West African and New World Negro religious music. 796 534 [794] 796 533

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has "arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic behavior attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan*, taking a calabash of water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in reverse; if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands. Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the central pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross with the candle before it. 796 787 [793] [794] [782] ● [788]

796 tablishment of the family *maison de servitude,* a special ritual [782] for Legba at the *barrière* was required. The one who took charge threw some rum on the *boucan* that had been made for Legba. Taking a candle, he struck the drums with it; then described *verver* and placed an egg on the white flour he piled 796 just inside the *barrière.* The rite proceeded no farther, how- 578 ever, for with the appearance of the head of the family, accompanied by his wife and son, who was the young man who had been possessed by Gede the first night of the *service,* a discussion arose which soon developed into a quarrel, because the family head felt that he had not been notified of this dance in the manner due his position. Finally with the cry: "If anything happens to the family because of this, I am not responsible," he departed in a rage. This was regarded as serious, because should a dance which ended an important rite be held with some of the family absent, the gods might be angered and serious consequences might follow. The woman, who had been instrumental in seeing that the *service* was given and had cared for most of the preparations, bravely decided to continue with the ritual, however, and the drumming was resumed.

796 Alcohol and flour were thereupon poured on the drum- 533 heads, while a number of songs were sung by all present:

539 [782]

Bonjou' manman, bonjou' papa,	Good-day, mamma, good-day, papa,
Ma p' mandé coumen nou' yè	I ask how are you.
Lan Guinée gangnin dent'.	In Guinea there are teeth.
Moin entré, moin entré,	I entered, I entered,
Ou pas salué moin.	You did not greet me.
Agoue-e, hunto	Agowe, hunto (spirit in the drum)
Agasu-e	Agasu-e
Agoué-e hunto, e-o.	Agowe hunto, e-o.

845 [illegible] 782 769 ample, long before ordinary folk.[8] If promised offerings in the event of an ample harvest, their aid in bringing about this desired end is even more fruitful than that of the *loa* or the dead, who are therefore appealed to only indirectly.

153 Twins, however, are capricious beings, ready to do harm if they are not humored. Consequently, twins must be given anything they ask for, and it is especially important to provide them with the clothes they covet, when giving a *mangé marassa*. If their father fails to provide these new clothes, they will *kembé* (seize) him, and he may at once have an attack of fever or a bad toothache or earache; or, more likely still, he will be seriously constipated, since this is the punishment particularly favored by the *marassa*, just as the *loa* most frequently send dysentery, and the dead cause headaches. 845 599 828 If lack of resources makes it impossible to provide what they demand, a painstaking explanation must be given them or they will drive a person mad in the manner recounted in the following *marassa* myth:

> There were once twins, one good and one evil. They were working a field with another brother, but the evil one refused to help. The other two, therefore, said they would not give him any food. Because of this the evil twin drove the third brother insane. After they had long prayed that he reconsider, he finally agreed to restore sanity to his brother, but insisted on inflicting deafness as a punishment, so that this brother was deaf until he died.

845 778 769 At the birth of twins, special "twin plates" are provided when their birth is announced to the *loa* — either before or after their Church baptism — where offerings to the spirits of twins are placed. Usually paired, the plates may be three in number, in which case the third is for the *dosu*, the child born after twins, who is believed to be even more powerful than twins themselves and is thus an important figure in the cult.

People come and go

and, wearying of the singing, join the group outside the house, 764
where those playing games and the story-tellers are gathered. 524
One popular game is "forfeits," and a forfeit, if reclaimed by a girl, requires the singing of a *chanson de romance,* or if by a man, calls for the recitation of a poem or a humorous folktale. Before a forfeit is returned, all sing to a hand-clapping [533]
accompaniment: [539]

C'est bien bon,	It is very good.
C'est bien bon,	It is very good,
Aha!	Aha!

Card-games, such as *mariai* (marriage), *trois-sept,* and *bezique,* are also played. All these games are entered into with zest, for an important purpose in holding the wake is to amuse the dead, whose body lies near by, and thus send him away in good humor. When drinks are passed, the recipients must 764
make three libations before drinking, one explanation hold- [782] ●
ing that this is in accordance with the formula Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, another that the offering is for the *loa,* the dead, and the *marasa.* At about five o'clock in the morning the angelus closes the wake, after which most of those present leave, and only close friends and relatives remain to help with preparations for the funeral. This must take place the day following death, not only because of a legal requirement, but because of the fact that were a body to remain unburied for two nights, the expense of two wakes would have to be met. Before the ceremony of burial takes place, small children are [775]
often passed over the coffin three times, in leave-taking, that [788]
the spirit of the dead may not return for them.

The funeral itself is held in accordance with the rites of the Church, the difference between funerals consisting principally in the elaborateness of the ritual and the length of time the church bells are tolled, which in turn is determined by the ability of the family of the dead to meet the varying fees. Thus at the funeral of the mother of the *député* from Mire-

always takes place on a Sunday. The prayers of the novena, 765
whatever week-day they may begin, are recited either by the [782]
priest, if in town, or by a *prêt' savanne*. The family and a few [793]
friends, who gather to hear the prayers and to sing hymns, take their places about a table covered with a white cloth, on which are placed *images* of the saints, a crucifix, two candles which must burn for the nine days, and two bouquets of flowers. A lamp of oil in a glass with a floating wick must also burn day and night. Each session of the novena lasts some two hours, and no refreshments are served those who attend.

On the day of the *dernière prière* those invited come to help cover the walls of the room with white sheets — sometimes the ceiling is also covered — and hang white curtains over doors and windows. Wreaths are placed on the table and attached to the sheets on the walls, and *images* of the saints are pinned to the white table-cloth as it hangs down. Liquor, cakes, *kola*, *clairin* and other refreshments are made ready, according to the family means, these being held so essential that if the family lacks the funds at the moment to provide them, the novena may be stopped on the eighth day, and the
dernière prière postponed for a month or even two. The same [533]
type of song is sung at this rite as at wakes, and the mourners wail once again, though not so loudly as just after the occurrence of death. At about eleven o'clock, after having recited the last prayer of the novena, a *libera* is sung to "drive the dead from the house," since now they are through with him
— followed by an *adoration* for the *prêt' savanne*. Since, un- [793]
like the custom at *vodun* ceremonies, these coins are his entire [465]
fee for the novena as well as for this evening's ceremony, he sees to it that the song which marks it continues until all members of the family have donated a sum that he regards adequate. The *adoration* over, the refreshments are passed, so that the *dernière prière* most often ends at midnight, though those in attendance sometimes remain until morning, playing games, telling stories, and singing canticles as at wakes.

The family then take the other con-
tainer to a crossroad, where it is deposited as an offering for Legba, and its contents are eaten by the dogs, who significantly, in Dahomey are the animals sacred to this deity. Following this, the adults enter the closed room, to feast at the laden table. [769] [782]

Several days after the funeral two gourdes are paid a priest — " a real one," not a *prêt' savanne* — to chant a *libera* at the grave, a rite that must be repeated each year on All Saints' Day. Each year, also, food is given the dead, though " not so much as following a funeral." Chickens, beans, rice, and coffee are the principal part of such an offering, for which no priest need be called, as the ceremony is merely to let the dead know that they are not forgotten. Every three or five years, however, a large *mangé* must be given for all the family dead, and if held on the family habitation, there is social dancing, where such favorites of the ancestors as the *martinique,* the *banda,* the *calebasse,* and the *zesse* are danced.[9] [773] [765] [535]

Differences in procedure mark various modes of death. When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no " last prayer," because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated. Those killed by lightning or who die of smallpox are not mourned, but no explanation could be obtained for this obvious survival of African custom. If a leper has concealed his disease, mourning is worn for him, though if the cause of death is generally known this is forgone. There is customarily no mourning for suicides, and never where the regulations of the Church are rigorously applied. 766 [771] [762]

If the dead person was a *vodun* priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance,* steps are taken before his death to " remove the *loa* from his head " so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause their family much harm 764 766 776 775

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to do. The *loa* would come, but they wouldn't give him the 435
same *connaissance.*" 776
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One of the most important of the forces behind all magic is
the *Malt' Carrefour,* the Master of the Crossroads. The pos- 789
sible identity of this *loa* with Legba, who guards the entrance 776
to houses and is also thought of as a guardian of the highways, was a question that could not be satisfactorily resolved, though it seems most likely that the two are quite distinct, since Legba is but rarely called upon when magic is being performed. One Haitian versed in magic stated:

> "The *Malt' Carrefour* is like the president. Legba is like a minister. God sent the *Malt' Carrefour.* He commands Baron Samedi. Before going to the cemetery to perform [black] magic you must pass the crossroads, and therefore he is able to restrain you if he is not properly worshipped. He commands Damballa. He commands the Rada and Pétro gods. He commands all the saints because all of these must pass the crossroads. Therefore when one has a *garde carrefour,* a person will die a death sent by God [that is, a natural death] and not one caused by *magic* or the *mystères.*"

The *Malt' Carrefour* must be "paid" each year on All 776
Saints' Day, when seven cents in copper coins are given and a 782
white chicken is killed, cooked, and placed in a wooden container with rice, biscuits, cassava, potatoes, bananas, and other kinds of food, both cooked and uncooked, to be deposited at a crossroad with the statement: "Here is food; thank you for having cared for me. If evil *loa* wish to harm me, *Malt' Carrefour,* restrain them." As this is said, a candle is lighted and an invocation pronounced:

"Au nom de Malt' Carrefou'; au nom de Malt' Grand [539]
Bois; au nom de Baron Cimitière! Jodia, premier la

776 *Toussaint, voici un couvert moin porté ba ou. Ou gardé*
782 *vot' enfant, comme vot' père et vot' mère dans la maison.*
[539] — In the name of the Master of the Crossroads; in the name of the Master of the Great Forest; in the name of Baron Cemetery! Today, the first of All Saints' Day, here are offerings I bring you. Guard your child as your father and your mother in the house."

[788] *Clairin* is thrown three times at each fork of the crossroads, and some is also sprinkled in the center and at each corner of the container of food. Three bits of earth are finally lifted from the corners of the crossroads and taken to the home of the worshipper. Here they are put in a plate with *clairin,* which is first lighted and then extinguished, so that the members of the family can anoint themselves with it and receive strength with which to face the new year.

789 821 Good magic has many expressions. Thus there is said to be secret knowledge, transmitted in certain families from generation to generation, of how to control the rains. Those who have control of magic of this sort are to be recognized when they are seen to be completely dry while walking in a downpour. Generally such powers are used to insure a rainless day for a *combite* or *service,* or to cause rain to fall the day after a *combite* has made the field ready for hoeing, or when the proper time for planting is at hand. Eventually, it is said, in response to a temptation too great to be resisted, the possessor
[784] of such magic will put it to other, evil ends. Then sooner or later the punishment for this abuse of his knowledge is visited upon him, so that in the end he meets his death by being struck by the avenging lightning.

789 The most powerful type of protective magic is known as a *drogue.* One of the most potent of these — of the type referred to by Léger in commenting on the ox-tail carried by Hyacinthe, or such a one as tradition holds Christophe possessed, which gave him immunity from all but silver bullets — makes

754 been made to kill through the use of black magic, Gede re-
776 fuses to "dig the grave," no matter what measures the *bocor*
may take. In such a case the victim may be desperately ill, but
787 will not die. When a *hungan* divines the cause, offerings are
782 made to Gede for having saved him from the *magie* of Baron.
For, in the final analysis, "if Gede is in accord with Baron,
death can come, but if the two are not in accord, the man
against whom a *wanga* has been sent will only suffer."

such matters as the passing on of the *loa* in families, the duties 59 614
toward family dead, and the possible inheritance of food 178
taboos are recalled. Like all these survivals, that of food taboos
is not as clear in its expression in Haiti as in its aboriginal 262
setting. Its determination is largely by trial and error, so that [843]
a mother, before the birth of her child, not only abstains from
eating the foods harmful to her, but later carefully tries these
on the child to ascertain their effect. Yet the custom, at best,
is a tenuous one. Sometimes, if food uncongenial to a parent
has ill effects on a person, "he goes on eating it until he becomes
accustomed to it"—though this statement brought
forth an emphatic dissent from another Haitian: "Not I! If
a food harms me once, I am through with it."

Africanisms are particularly marked in the organization of 769
and attitudes toward the ancestral cult. Today the fear of the 17
power of the dead is as living in Haiti as in West Africa, despite
the influence of the Catholic Church in changing concepts
of the heavenly world of the dead and the role of ghosts
on earth. It is quite true that the outer forms of ceremonialism
taken by ancestor-worship in West Africa have disappeared;
but when the meticulousness with which the rites of death
are carried out, and the institution of *mangé morts* are remembered,
it is seen that the spirit of African ritual observances
has by no means been lost. African elements have survived
even in the services for the dead, now largely taken over
by the Church. On the anniversary of death a special commemorative
mass is sung in the church, which the family of
the dead attend in a body. Before they leave the habitation [782]
for the mass, however, animals are killed to provide meat for
the feast which follows the Church service, and for the *mangé
morts*, which also takes place at the same time. Immediately [574]
after the mass a reception takes place at the house of some
member of the family who lives in town, or at the home of a
friend, where cakes and liquors are served. At about noon,
however, family and friends proceed to the habitation, where

makes for deification of the family dead, but constitutes the 776 771
oldest ancestor of a relationship group one of the great gods 178
and thus causes families to give primary allegiance to a re- 424
stricted number of deities. The most striking aspect of this 769
tradition preserved in Haiti is that all ceremonies must be 787
given by family groups, and at them only members of the fam- 796
ily may with propriety become possessed. Possession itself, and 171
the elements which constitute the possession complex — the 178
use of the drums, the rhythms associated with particular gods, 53
the importance of songs in calling the spirits, the mode of worship through specific dances for specific deities — these make up another series of Africanisms. In the dance itself the use of iron to sound basic rhythms for the drums, the outer form and function of the rattle, and the fact that the circle of participants always rotates in a counter-clockwise direction, are equally African. The modes of behavior to be observed as possession comes on and the psychological release that follows it both derive from the same source, as do the beliefs that rituals must be held on the days sacred to the particular god being worshipped.

Another retention of African tradition is a belief in the im- 171
portance of sacrifice. It will be remembered that it is held to 178
be more essential to "feed" the gods than to dance for them. 782
This is also the tradition of all peoples of the region from which the slaves were derived, and in a sense reflects the very immediate relationship that obtains between Africans, or Haitians, and their gods. Since in both regions each deity performs the double role of doing good for those who worship it properly and harassing those who neglect it, the importance of giving adequate sacrifices to avert evil is evident. In both Haiti and Africa, however, these may differ with the wealth of the individual giving the offering, with the number of persons who contribute toward the ceremony where offerings are given, or with the seriousness of the situation which the deity is being asked to remedy. That the gods permit such varia-

171 178 782 tion is a further comment both upon the human traits ascribed to them, and upon the realism with which they take cognizance — as only African gods can — of the financial position of their devotees!

171 178 776 778 It is not only in the immediacy of the Haitian gods to their worshippers and in their human qualities, however, that these beings have retained African traits, for in the full reciprocity that must prevail in the relationship between deities and their followers is to be seen a point of view that is entirely non-European. Between man and the gods the rule of *quid pro quo* must always be in operation; and this rule may only be regarded as but another contribution of Africa toward Haitian religious ideology. While this reciprocal giving flavors all aspects of worship whether it be of the *loa,* the dead, or the twins, it takes a yet more prominent, and more familiar place in the field of magic, since here the *engagement* owes much to European belief, though the element of reciprocity is much more emphasized than was ever the case in medieval European diabolism.

178 776 794 [184] The psychological values of the *vodun* cult, especially the general tone found in the feeling toward the terms *Guinée* or *Rada,* perhaps most convincingly show the attitudes that aided in the retention of things recognizably African. For while the Pétro gods are by no means viewed as altogether bad, or are always held unwelcome, the fact that in Mirebalais, as in Haiti generally, the Rada gods are those least feared, most desired, and in connection with whose cult wrongdoing is most rarely present, is of the greatest significance, especially when the related fact is recalled that the Pétro gods are the more powerful in the matter of evil magic, while the Rada deities are said to exert their power to protect their devotees from the dark forces that may be set in motion against them.

178 777 776 In attitudes toward the gods, then, in the names of the gods themselves, in the manner in which they function in the lives of Haitians, and in the importance of the ceremonial con-

is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of 177 793
His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But 794
the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and 788
it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne*
that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian,
hold emotional force and psychological value.

In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preceding 534
chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African 782
spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustration 778
can be given of this merging of traditions than in a detailed [777]
account of the manner of making and validating *vodun*
drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log
type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of
pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before
the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation
was pronounced by their maker and an offering — a *mangé
sec* — was made, that all the gods might come when called by
the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *verver* described
about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were
rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were
given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same refreshment.
After the tree had been felled and that part of the [322]
trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was
free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first
gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark,
and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before
the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin*
was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation
of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole
bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant
manman. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head
is first attached here; and here the cord about the head
is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always
be first struck when the completed drum is tuned.

534 782 778 The drumheads were cut from a large ox-hide, purchased in the market place. In the early morning sunlight another "little ceremony" was performed before they were attached. Placing the three unheaded bodies of the drums in a row, with the iron in its place, the maker poured *clairin* before each, and having cut a native candle in three pieces, he took them in his left hand as he crossed himself, saying: "*Au nom d' Père, au nom d' Fils, au nom d' Saint Esprit.*" He then [788] lighted the three wicks, and taking each lighted candle in turn in his right hand, he made the sign of the cross with it and attached it to the "mother peg" of each drum. There the flames were allowed to flicker for a moment before the work of heading the drums began.

534 The hide was first attached to the "mother peg," then to the one opposite, and then to the two at right angles to the first pair. This is hard work, for to obtain the proper degree of initial tautness several men must strain at the resistant hide, and that is why four cuts are made where a peg is to go instead of the three that are needed, for frequently a strip breaks and the extra hole is used to re-thread the peg. The great drum has nine pegs, the one of medium size seven, and the small one six, not five, "because the *boula* is a thief, taking the beat away from the iron." The head was cut away from the rest of the great ox-hide only after it was in place. The final step was to knot the cord — braided the day before, of native sisal — to the *manman* peg of each drum, and then to twine it eight, six, or five times about their bodies.

534 778 788 The drums, now finished, were then put aside for a week to allow the damp heads to dry, awaiting the final sanctification. During this period they could not be played. It was held unwise to do more than tap them lightly with the finger-nail to test their resonance and the extent to which the heads were dry. Meanwhile preparations were being made for the baptism. [292] Drums, like human beings, must be clothed when they appear in public, and *rades*, apron-like garments, a white bro-

The falls, therefore, in association
with the purely Catholic rituals carried on at the village 778
church, are seen to hold an important if unofficial place in the 796
complex of rites known in the Haitian Church calendar as 177
the Fête of Saut d'Eau.

During the two or three days preceding the fête and on the 778
fifteenth of July itself, an air of great gayety not unlike the 796
carnival spirit accompanying European Church festivals per- 78
vades the surrounding country. Camions traverse the almost 177 (494)
impassable side road, bringing crowds of people from Port-au-
Prince, from the Dominican border, and even from the north,
who throng the streets and the shrines and tramp the miles
from the village to the waterfalls or visit the nearer sacred
sites of St. John's Wood and En bas Palmes, to light candles
and ask the satisfaction of their needs. Like the falls them-
selves, these spots by their very beauty awaken a sense of emo-
tional awareness, and it is not strange that here, as at the falls,
many possessions occur. At night, in particular, the great trees
with their interlacing serpent-like roots, the gaping earth
which at En bas Palmes is witness to the uprooting of the palm
trees where the miracle occurred, and the stream of sacred
water, all make a scene of indescribable eeriness, heightened
by the flickering candles given as offerings, and the open
lamps of those who stay the night here to fulfill their vows.

In the town itself gambling and other games go on, and 796
dances of all kinds are held at night, among them *vodun* and 787
bal, though at these public dances no possessions are counte- 177
nanced. One of the most colorful aspects of the scene is the 534
penitants, wearing clothing of varied colors in fulfillment of 525
a request by the *loa* they worship or an obligation to them. 535
Such folk are not permitted in church unless the clothing 782
which marks them is covered by ordinary dress, but they walk 292
the streets, often possessed and often using their power to heal 755
those whom they encounter. Possessions by Ogun, by Gede,
by Baron Samedi, by Damballa, by Erzilie and other *vodun*
deities were observed, particularly at the shrines, where their
devotees prophesied and healed the sick.

000
796 devotees prophesied and healed the sick. Even at the church,
782 however, where all go to offer the prayers that are the central
776 observance of the fête, the many candles placed on the rocks at
177 the entrance are usually for St. Anthony; that same St. Anthony who, it will be recalled, is the *loa* named Legba, the guardian of all entrances.

771 177 It is obvious, from the examples given, that the world view held by the Haitian and the motivations which underlie Haitian life cannot be understood unless both the Catholic and the *vodun* contributions to them are held in mind. But certain further questions bearing upon the effect of these two influences present themselves. What proportion of Haitians hold membership in the Church, and how many are affiliated with the *vodun* sect? What attitudes are manifested toward the Church and its priests as contrasted with their attitude toward the *loa* and their ministrants? How does the Church meet the challenge of *vodun*? And how does the Haitian peasant, in his inner life, reconcile these two conflicting forces?

[784] The impression gained from reading available works on Haiti is that voduists and Catholics constitute two distinct groups. While this may obtain in some parts of the Republic, it is not true either in Mirebalais or in those other portions of Haiti which came under direct though brief observation in the course of this study. All discussions with natives that began with the assumption of the existence of two such separate groups led to confusion, and statements which had seemed evasions were not clarified until the incorrectness of such an assumption became apparent. Thus when it was stated that in all Haiti the Pater Noster was one of the first things taught every child, the question: " Is this not true for Catholic families only? " was met with a vigorous denial that was slowly justified as the realization grew that, if not true for all Haitians, such an assertion was certainly valid for the vast majority of them in Mirebalais and probably elsewhere.[18] The identity of membership in the two groups became apparent from ob-

as a limping old man, clad in tatters, but in his several manifestations 776
has more specific characteristics. Thus Legba Pié
Cassé is described as having paralyzed legs, with arms held
stiff and crooked before him, and Legba Avardra is spoken
of as a *vagabond* who continually wanders the principal highways.
Legba must first be summoned before any ceremony
may begin, and when it was asked how Legba could be expected
to come when called simultaneously to three or four or
twenty or fifty places, the parallel given was that of the multiple
manifestations of which God or Christ or a saint is capable.
Legba, identified with St. Anthony, has Tuesday as his sacred
day, and the plum tree is reserved for him. He " eats " a varicolored 776
type of cock known as *poule zinga*, marked like a 782
guinea-fowl, and in this differs from other gods who must
indicate through a possessed devotee or a diviner what specific
offering among the things they favor is wanted on the occasion
of each sacrifice. Though in southern Haiti the smallest [184]
chick from each hatching is reserved for Legba, and at least
once during his lifetime a man puts aside a bullock or a
male goat as a sacrifice for this god, these customs do not prevail
in Mirebalais. Here, when an offering to the gods is in
prospect, Legba is included among the *loa* to whom a certain
animal is promised, and, as in the case of other deities, this
animal is thereafter under his protection. But this is the nearest
approach to any special offerings for this god.

Damballa, an important Rada god whose symbol is the serpent, 776
is said to bring rain because they sing "*Damballa nan [821]
l'eau* — Damballa in the water." The sacred color of this [822]
deity, worn by devotees under possession, is white, and the
full initiates wear white necklaces as well as white clothing.
This god, identified with St. Patrick, is especially worshipped [782]
on Thursdays, and shares the white fig tree with Erzilie and
Gran' Siligbo. Damballa " eats " sacrifices of white chickens
and pigeons, rice, milk, eggs, pineapples, and fig-bananas;
and " drinks " *kola* and sweetened coffee. Damballa forms the [821]

776 [821] rainbow, and this is called an *arc d'alliance* between him and Aida Wedo, his wife, whose characteristic dress is blue and [171] white. Sobo, who in Dahomey is the god of thunder, is also believed in Haiti to give thunder, though he is not thought to live in the sky. As in Africa, his symbol is the ram. Aizan lives in the water, and is a favored deity because he gives his devotees the power of healing and of divining.

Erzilie, a *loa* of considerable importance, is envisaged as a pale, trembling woman who also inhabits the water. She constantly changes her dresses, of which she has many. All agree that she is a fabulously wealthy woman, who wears golden chains about her neck and has many rings, a characterization derived from her identification with Mater Dolorosa, whose chromolithographs depict her with many rich ornaments. As a Rada *loa* she "eats" the same food as Damballa, and wears white, like this other god, but has Friday as her sacred day. In her less pleasant manifestation of Erzilie Gé Rouge, the red-eyed one, she is a member of the Pétro "squad," and is held to be the wife of Simbi d'l'eau, with whom she is believed to get on especially well, since they "eat" different foods. Simbi, who is worshipped on Tuesdays and inhabits the mango and calabash trees, is said to drink heavily, however, and occasionally becomes so boistrous in his cups that he destroys the furniture and otherwise makes himself so objectionable that Erzilie is forced to leave him until he becomes sober.

[171] Ogun, in Haiti as in Nigeria, is the god of war. The Nigerian Shango is also found, though the Haitians conceive Shango as a *loa* who acts as the servant of the Ogun deities, [782] particularly Ogun Badagri and Ogun Batala. Ogun "eats" [822] red cocks and red beans mixed with rice, and his color, red, is worn by his devotees. To this fact may be referred the custom [114] of the Caco warriors who fought against the American [648] Marines in 1918–20 to wear red as their distinguishing color, something referred to by Wirkus (pp. 22 ff.), though he

776 it joins the flooded Artibonite as its master accompanies
823 Clairmé on his way to consult with the great ruler of the
sea, Agwe. Actually, at the height of the rainy season the force
of the light colored muddy water of the major stream holds
back the darker colored flow of its tributaries in a manner
which accords with the legend, so that, observing the Tombe
River at one such time, the Haitians who were present said:
" The Tombe is waiting for its master to pass."

776 Gede, a deity who figures in both the Rada and the Pétro
[184] groups as chief functionary under Baron Samedi, ruler of
[794] cemeteries, is tolerated rather than favored, though his re-
wards to his devotees include the refusal to dig a premature
[789] grave for them. When Gede possesses a devotee at a dance,
Damballa, Ogun, and the other Rada gods " leave " at once,
and those who are possessed by them come out of their pos-
sessions. For though Gede is no less a *loa* than other gods, " He
is a *zombi* and is fed apart "; as the Haitians say: " The *loa*
are like human beings. They will not mingle with the dead,
[822] and Gede is of the dead." His color is black, and Saturday
is his sacred day. He " eats " salt herring, hot peppers, cassava,
[782] roasted corn, roasted bananas, and other roasted foods. He
[825] drinks *clairin* — much of it — and at great ceremonies a
black goat and chickens are killed for him, as well as those
chickens with ruffled feathers called *djakati,* which in all the
New World, as in Africa, are believed to discover and dig
up magic charms set against their owners. He lives in the
cemetery, " behind the cross." There are a number of deities
whose names are compounded with the name of Gede —
Gedenibo, Gedeonsu, Gedehun — and hence the question
whether or not this is a generic term or a specific designation is
pertinent. There is no agreement on this point, and it could
only be established that those *loa* who bear the same name,
such as all Ogun or Bosu or Simbi deities, are brothers; but
who the parents of these groups may have been is not known.

Associated with Simbi and Gede in the Pétro " squad " are the various forms of Bosu and 'Ti Kita. Some hold that Bosu lives in the mountains and the cemeteries, but not in the water; others state that he does not live in the mountains, but in the water and on the plain. As a matter of fact, there is a Bosu of the water, and there would also seem to be one of the plain, of the crossroads, and of the mountains, each with its own name. 'Ti Kita, conceived as a woman, is also associated with the cult of magic and the dead. She is "fed" a goat, which is almost invariably referred to as Maria Louisa, or Louisa. 776 [782]

121 one seed from that tomato would ever take root under the hot sun. Some
241 time later, when I knew this man well, I talked to him about the care
with which seeds must be planted if they are to grow properly. I told him
121 how *we* grew *our* tomatoes. He listened carefully, nodding his head.
241 When I had finished he said: "Yes, that must be a good way to do things
776 in your country. But here in this valley God is good. He does not forget
his children. From the broken tomato many plants will sprout. When
God is good to you, you do not have to count the seeds." I suggested that
perhaps one should not waste any of the precious seeds that God had
provided; and to this he replied: "How is there waste? My garden is made
to flourish by Zaka [the country man's special deity]. Some people give
Zaka a feast every year, but between times they forget. Zaka helps me in
my work, and I don't forget him. When I break the tomato and put it on
the ground that way, it is a little taste for Zaka. Whatever I plant, I give
him some. He is good to me, I am good to him."

241 What I learned from many incidents like this one was that the eye does
771 not always see correctly. The old man was not just planting tomatoes, nor
782 was he performing a conventionalized ritual act. It was a highly personalized act of faith in nature and confidence in the deity who shared his work.

771 A large part of this book deals with Vodoun, the religious practices
78 based on West African traditions. One soon discovers that the songs and
[121] dances of Vodoun ritual are not merely music and motion supplementing
and decorating more serious affairs. Virtually every aspect of Vodoun
ritual is placative or invocational. The songs that are sung and the dances
that are danced are direct supplication of various supernatural forces.

121 Undoubtedly, a number of principles which are put forward in this
184, study do not apply equally to every region of Haiti; but they are, I think,
78 true in general terms. Not until one has accepted the fact that different
explanations exist for given phenomena, that the same rites are performed
in different fashion in different places, and that the cult priests themselves
do not agree on many details, may one begin to work toward a general
view of the Haitian scene.

771 All of Haitian life is not Vodoun. And there are of course some Haitians
184 who are relatively outside the central circle of its influence. But the inner
533 meanings of Vodoun and its relationship to the total view of life permeate
535, the entire scene. Music, too, binds together practically the entire fabric of
Haitian existence. It is essential not only to the cult temple but to count-
[461] less workaday activities. Agrarian work groups often perform their tasks
to the accompaniment of a drum. And in the cult temple, the iron hoe of
the fields often serves as a percussion instrument.

000 ***The Drum and the Hoe*** is the result of studies made over a period of

793 approval of the candidate's elevation is needed. He is also regarded as
[769] being on more intimate terms with the family ancestors who, likewise,
must be in accord with the proceedings. The candidate for the asson is
[783] confined within the hounfor for a number of days, during which he takes
purification baths and participates in other rituals. The rites that take
place during this period are prescribed by the elder priest who has assumed
responsibility. When the purification is ended, the candidate
emerges into the *peristyle* (roofed court) to participate in the general service,
and to undergo further tests.

Present during the ceremonies are all the principal houngans of the
region—men who will be friendly associates of the new priest or, possibly,
unfriendly competitors. The candidate is tested on his knowledge
[789] of how to use the asson and the tiny hand bell, and in the course of the
service he is mounted by the loa who is the chief protector of the cult temple.
● [782] Animals are sacrificed, and all the loa sacred to the hounfor are invoked
and asked for their approval and support. But it is not only the loa
[794] and the dead who must indicate their approval. The elder houngan polls
the hounsi kanzo on whether they will accept their new cult chief and follow
[533] him. He also asks the chief drummer, who polls his assistant drummers.
It is taken for granted that the decision is in the hands of the hounsi.
The consensus is known before the actual service, but the formality of
asking the question is observed. Should the hounsi refuse to accept the
candidate for the asson, the elevation cannot take place.

793 The city and the countryside contain many self-styled houngans and
554 bocors who are not recognized as bona fide by the community, regardless
626 of the route by which they claim to have achieved their station. Sometimes
[791] they are regarded as *pas fort* (not strong); that is, they do not have profound
knowledge and understanding. The Haitian is quick to detect the
difference between a houngan who knows and one who does not know.
Many are stated to be outright fakes. One man who attempted to hold
a service in Port-au-Prince aroused such contempt and disgust that a number
of persons who had been drawn by genuine interest walked out with
remarks that the man should be punished. In fact, his failure to show any
[533] essential qualifications for the houngan's role was commented upon in
a song of ridicule that made its appearance at a secular dance that same
night. The song noted some of the humorous aspects of the service, such
as when the "impostor" struck himself vigorously on the head with the
flat of a machete to show his "strength" and virtually incapacitated himself
for the rest of the evening.

346 It is easily observed that no two hounfors are exactly alike. They differ

776 787 they say, and "rides" them. What the possessed persons do then depends upon the personality and whim of the loa. Generally they take on the special personal characteristics of the loa. Their voices and manners change and their postures and attitudes undergo transfiguration. They may talk about the "island below the water," about community ancestors, about intimate affairs of the community, or about how things are going back in Africa. Sometimes they utter words or phrases recognized as "African language." And on occasion possessed persons talking *langage* are said to be speaking Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, or Spanish. At the moment of first impact, when the loa enter their heads, they stagger, jerk, and tremble, often falling on the ground. Then, soon afterward, their behavior begins to move in a groove of conventionalized activity.

[346] [778] [782] Most commonly the loa arrive during religious rituals or dances. They come by way of the *po'teau mitan,* the center pole which supports the roof of the peristyle. It is around this pole that the sacred vèvès, or flour drawings, are made. At the foot of the pole sacrifices are offered and libations are poured.

787 793 [533] Yet possession may occur anywhere and at any time. The sound of a certain drumbeat may be the signal for it, or a sudden fright, or an emotional crisis, or any situation to which possession has been conditioned. The houngan or the mambo may facilitate possession, control it, and terminate it. The cult priest is acutely sensitive to the conditions favorable to possession. He knows how to heighten emotional tension and how to soften it. A competent houngan "plays" his service as though it were a delicate instrument. He takes everything in, issues instructions to his servitors from time to time, orders the drum tempo increased or diminished, knows how to change pace. Sometimes he hovers in the background unobtrusively, encouraging the singing and dancing like a benevolent father. At other times he comes to the center of the activities and takes command. He becomes the focus of all eyes. His slightest action is watched with intensity. He may take the hand of one of the servitors, pirouette him about, and compel the loa to enter. When the servitor is "mounted," the houngan may conduct him through ritual activity. At the right moment the houngan may help the loa to leave.

776 787 The spectators who observe possession in others are usually aware of the identity of the loa who has entered. When the ancient loa Damballa Wèdo comes in, his "horse" falls to the ground, wriggles like a snake, and makes what are considered to be snakelike sounds in his throat. For Damballa is the venerable deity identified with the rainbow, which in ancient Dahomean lore was thought to be the great serpent come out from the underworld to drink after a rain. When the loa Ogoun Chango enters,

his "horse" may trample in glowing coals, plunge his hands in boiling oil, 776
or play with red-hot iron bars. For Ogoun Chango is a fire-eater—a deity 787
of the forge and of battle. The deity Legba is characterized as a limping
old man. A "horse" possessed by Legba may cavort about on a kind of
cane-crutch called a Legba stick. Each loa has his distinctive mark. As the
Haitians say, "you learn about the loa by watching his horses."

In addition to having homes in Africa or below the water, most loa 776
have special residing places in Haiti, such as stones, caves, trees, waterfalls, 778
or springs. One may come across a boulder or a bamboo grove sacred to [782]
a certain loa, and food offerings are likely to be seen there. Many loa are
identified with some specific variety of tree and will "inhabit" all such
trees throughout the country. Loa Calbassie, for example, lives in the
calabash tree, and Loa Général Brisé in the chardette tree. Offerings to [782]
these deities are set out underneath the tree or hung in its branches, and
services may be held around the trunk.

Loa also live in the old Carib and Arawak celts which are found from
time to time. These "loa stones," as they are called, are identified by their
forms and their ability to pass certain tests. Some Haitians declare the
stones must be able to "whistle," to perspire when blown upon, and to
"talk." The loa stones ordinarily are passed on from one generation to
another, in the hounfor and in the peasant hut alike. In this way the loa
who inhabit them are inherited. Sometimes, but rarely, stones are sold; [432]
disposing of a loa stone requires an elaborate ceremony to guarantee that [782]
the seller will not be injured by the loa, who is likely to feel "wounded."
In such a ceremony the loa is fed and placated and asked to go his way in
peace. The loa stones are sometimes called "thunder stones," in the belief [171]
that they were hurled to earth by the deities Kebiosu, Sobo, and Chango
(all of whom had similar functions among the Arada and Yoruba
peoples of West Africa). The stones are cared for by their owners with
the greatest reverence.

Loa are acquired by individuals in various ways. Many Haitians hold 776
that every infant is born with a *malt' tête*—a spirit who is "master of the
head." In this light, no individual is without a loa, although the deity may
never manifest interest in the individual by an act of possession. A man
may acquire a loa in the course of his life, although in that event the
original malt' tête must be retired from his head. The "inherited" loa
are usually not the personal deities but the special protectors of the household or the hounfor and are known as "loa of the house" or "family loa."

Should a man acquire a new loa to replace the old as his malt' tête, he 776
must undergo a ceremony known as *lavé tête*—the "washing of the head." 789
The old loa is retired and sent away, leaving the field clear for the new

When the dance drumming ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into
the hounfor. Then they sat on the ground while the houngan came for- 793
ward to the center post to make his ritual flour drawing. Holding the flour 794
in his hand, he allowed a little of it to trickle out in a fine white line. He 782
worked rapidly, with half-closed eyes, speaking *langage*. A complicated 789
white geometric pattern grew on the earth around the center post. Among 792
its intricate designs highly stylized phallic forms were discernible. When 795
the houngan had finished the drawing, he wrote the name of the loa 532
whom they were serving: Ogoun Badagry. Then the other houngans and mambos came forward, one at a time, to add to the design. When the vèvè was completed it covered virtually the entire dance court.

The laplace came from the hounfor with a bundle of brilliantly colored 793
beads. He stood by the houngan at the center post. One by one the hounsi 794
came before the houngan, dropped on their knees, and kissed the ground. 782
Around each hounsi's neck the houngan placed a string of beads. He raised 789
her, pirouetted her first to the right, then to the left. The pirouette was to 796
encourage possession by the loa.

From the hounfor the hounsi now brought herbs and vegetables for the [782] ●
sacrifice. Baskets and bottles were set out neatly on the ground, along with bundles of sticks and the iron pots, or *zins*.

The dance was resumed in a single rotating line around the houngan and the ritual offerings. Two hounsi in the center of the circle built fires, one on each side of the court. Over the fires they set the ritual iron pots. They poured oil into the pots and began the preparation of ritual food balls, like dumplings, from the ingredients at hand. One by one they dropped the dumplings into the oil, which was soon boiling.

The drumming, singing, and dancing were sustained at a high tension. A second team of drummers took over without a break in the music. The dancers now were almost exhausted. With a quick motion, the houngan spilled some rum into one of the boiling pots. A blue alcohol flame shot high into the air. Some of the hounsi screamed but continued to dance. Three of them fell to the ground, their limbs jerking uncontrollably. The loa had entered. Two of the "mounted" hounsi arose and continued to dance, staggering and jerking across the dance court. The third had to be lifted and carried into the hounfor.

The man who was to undergo initiation was waiting in the *djévo*, a special room in the hounfor. For the past seven days he had lain on a mat in the djévo, in virtual isolation except for visits from the houngan and the laplace.

Now the kanzo initiate was brought out, completely covered with a white cloth. Only his hands and feet could be seen. With one hand on the shoulder of the laplace, who preceded him, he moved with the dancers

were set out in a row, and before them four *couis*, the half-gourd bowls 769
used in services to the marassas, the twin spirits. 796

In the house, at the center of the floor, was a round flat stone about ten 787
inches in diameter and about two inches thick, resembling a millstone. 778
This was the *pierre-manman*, the mother stone responsible for the coming of the other loa stones and who cared for them in the absence of the family. In this stone, they said, was the spirit of the old loa Nananbouclou. On a mat in the corner of the room two children slept.

Outside, on a chair, his back against the wall of the house, the houngan 769
sat, his rattle and bell in hand. He had come several miles to conduct the 796
service. Most of those who danced were his own hounsi. The houngan 787
was "strong" and well known in the region; people said he had worked 793
for high government officials, including the president himself.

After several rounds of Arada dancing in which children as well as 769
adults took part, the drums stopped. The houngan and his laplace moved 796
up to the building which served for the night as the hounfor. It was up a 794
steep slope, about a hundred feet from the dance court. There they pre- 787
pared for the sacrifice to Chêbo Profiel, the honored loa of the evening. Passing in and out among the spectators was a woman who would be possessed by Papa Chêbo; since he was the guest of the service, she (or the loa in her head) was free to come and go as she chose, to speak as she pleased, and to do what she wished. Mostly she shook hands with people, a ceremony which continued throughout the night. First she would offer the right hand, then the left; or perhaps both at once, in which case the hands would be shaken downward vigorously three or four times. Someone ignorantly said, "Bon soir, Madame!" and she turned on him to reprimand his insolence. She was not "Madame," she was *l'Autorité*, the Authority.

During the course of the evening the conviction became stronger and stronger in her that she was Chêbo Profiel. From the time we first saw her until the end of the evening her personality underwent marked changes. She "became" Papa Chêbo.

The houngan sat before a small hole, possibly a foot deep and ten inches 782 ●
in diameter, in front of the hounfor. The fresh earth was piled neatly to 793
the side, and an enameled plate was set on top of it. Around the hole were 796
the various dishes to be offered to Chêbo Profiel. The laplace prayed in 787
Latin, a short Catholic service. Then the houngan, shaking his beaded 769
rattle and tinkling his bell, called for Chêbo to "enter." He made a small
maize-flour drawing around the hole, and then began the feeding of the [532]
loa. The plates arranged for the feast contained roasted maize, roasted peanuts, bread, cassava, rice, and other foods. There were bottles of rum,

793 kola (a soft drink), *clairin*, and syrup. The houngan, entreating Chĕbo to
796 accept, poured a little *clairin* into the hole. The loa seemed to accept, for
782 the *clairin* was quickly absorbed in the ground. The houngan took rice
787 from the plate with his fingers, about the amount he might place in his
769 own mouth, and put it gently into the hole. He was feeding Papa Chĕbo,
literally placing the food in his mouth. After the rice, which was dry,
the houngan poured in a little more *clairin* to moisten it. He ordered the
laplace to break up the bread, and then he placed a small piece in the hole
and washed it down with a little rum. The houngan seemed to understand
that Papa Chĕbo Profiel was hungry, and that he was also an epicure. He
allowed him to taste the roasted corn, and then washed it down with a
trickle of kola. Then he gave him a taste of the roasted peanuts, and
another morsel of bread. Once Chĕbo got his mouth too full in his zest for
the meal, and the assemblage had to wait for him to finish "coughing."
Then the houngan gave him a long drink of kola to clear his windpipe.
After that the houngan was more careful in the way he fed him—a little
cassava, a drink, a little bread. As the houngan fed the loa, some of the
spectators reached over and placed small coins in the empty dish by the
hole. These too were for Chĕbo. Finally, Chĕbo was through eating. The
food was gone.

769 The houngan, shaking his rattle and his bell, blew two sharp notes on
794 his whistle. At the door of the hounfor appeared l'Autorité, the hounsi
789 possessed by Papa Chĕbo. More than ever she resembled the loa, and less
796 than ever she resembled herself. In one hand she held a saber. Her bodily
[793] movements were spasmodic, as though she was being forced to do things
[534] to which she was not accustomed. She moved slowly into the circle, her
eyes almost closed; she leaned backward, then twisted grotesquely around,
jerked this way and that, buffeted by the loa. Suddenly she began to whirl.
[793] The houngan called "Tambouyé!" and the drummers beat a slow complicated rhythm, a salute to Chĕbo. The loa had really "entered" now. There
was no mistaking the jerky, irresponsible movements of the hounsi's head
and shoulders. She leaned backward as though about to fall, incredibly
kept her balance, rolled forward as though she were going to plunge to
the ground, and twisted herself upright once more. The saber passed
close to the faces of the spectators, even scratched some of them and cut
their clothing. Her movements had a definitely masculine character.
Chĕbo Profiel was a man.

782 She reached over to seize a chicken that was held out to her. Grasping
787 its legs with her free hand, she continued her spinning, twisting, lurching
784 dance. Then she cradled the chicken, rocking it back and forth until it
796 was in a hypnotic trance. She placed it on the ground before a tiny pile
769

of ground maize prepared by the laplace. The chicken, released, sat mo- 782
tionless, making no effort to escape. All watched attentively, the houngan 787
shaking his rattle and bell. Suddenly the chicken cocked its head and, 769
seeming to see the corn for the first time, reached out and pecked at it. 794
This was the loa receiving the sacrifice—a difficult conception if one thinks 796
of the chicken itself as the sacrifice. "Chèbo," l'Autorité, snatched the chicken up, danced violently about, the loa in full possession of her body. With a swift movement of the saber, she cut the chicken's throat and caused the first drop of blood to fall into the hole. When the chicken stopped struggling, it was left there, head downward. L'Autorité took up a cock which was given her, cradled him, and set him before the ground maize. When he pecked at it, she picked him up and danced, around and around, jerking, lunging, never quite falling. She took his comb between her teeth, supporting his body gently with her hands, and spun around and around. Then she released him, cut his throat, and placed him in the hole with the chicken.

At the side of the hounfor, waiting, was a goat (called by the ritual name Dogwé). He had a fine silky white coat and a long beard. He was brought in to the place of sacrifice, and l'Autorité dropped to her knees to embrace his neck with her arms. She remained there a moment, her cheek against his, talking to him. Then she arose, a machete in hand instead of a saber, and began to pirouette while three men threw the goat on his side. Then she cut with the machete, and the goat's blood, too, began to run into the hole. For the first time her dance became unquestionably frenzied. She swung strong, full blows of the machete at the goat's neck, finally severing the head. From the hindquarters she cut a piece of red meat and placed it in her mouth.

At a signal from the houngan, three men carried the goat's body away to be dressed and cooked, and a woman came forward to wipe the blood from Papa Chèbo's face.

The drums began again, a Dahomé dance, and the people relaxed. Many [535]
joined in the dancing while l'Autorité strutted about shaking hands and talking *langage*. She also danced, with gestures and movements wholly masculine. At one point she briefly advanced on another woman, making sexual gestures.

The houngan and his houngénicon retired to the front room of the hut. 769
A new mat had been placed there for the houngénicon. She lay down on it, 793
and the houngan sat in a chair against the wall. This was the beginning 794
of the ceremony of calling *les morts en bas dleau* (the dead below the 796
water).

Meanwhile, before the hounfor, the laplace and a hounsi were building [346]

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kèlè manyan!* 796
Oh, Damballa Wèdo *è, kèlè manyan.* 769
Oh, Ayida Wèdo *è, kèlè manyan!* 787
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kèlè manyan!* [539]

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *cord* [776]
to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light,
and the service was over.

SERVICE FOR ÈZILIE FRÉDA AND ST. JACQUES MAJEUR

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded 796
by four walls, adjoining the hounfor of Alexis Stephan on the west fringes 776
of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the hounfor and dance court was a 346
shrine to the "dead" loa Gèdé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open
on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy [532]
of Gèdé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire— [354]
black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank
face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's 796
adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, [794]
encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed
to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the [522]
gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and devotees of Stephan's hounfor. Everyone was watching with affection an old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to her and say something like: "Woy, Manman, mais ou passé mwé!" (Oh, Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephan, made a casual entrance through the [793]
door of his adjoining hounfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in [534]
his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. 796
Soon, only the hounsi, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums 776
played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun service. [794]
For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves
the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the greatest
of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on [782]
the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

243 In the Artibonite Valley, where much rice is grown, a similar ceremony
796 takes place before the rice is gathered from the fields. In this ceremony it
769 is rice that is shared with the family ancestors, who have first rights, and
with close friends who have aided with the planting. This feast is called
[252] *mangé diri,* or sometimes *gouté diri,* the tasting of the rice. Small amounts
of rice are taken from the fields, cooked with red beans or Congo beans,
or perhaps made into dumplings. The farmer's friends and relatives gather
[524] while the food is still cooking, and play games such as *wari* and *trois-sept.*
[538] The children play *gage* games and sing songs, and sometimes a *malt' conte*—a storyteller—comes to entertain them.

When the food is finally ready, the family ancestors are given their share. The farmer takes a calabash bowl of the rice and walks around the house grounds calling upon his immediate ancestors to accept their share. He drops a little food on the ground for the remembered dead, for the unknown dead who preceded them, for the Haitian dead, and for the dead of Africa. He also drops small portions for the dead twins, the dead albinos, the deformed dead, and the dead who have lost limbs, and for the distressed dead who have been improperly buried, or who may not have received the feasts that were due them. Afterward, he offers food to those who died of drowning, or who were lost at sea and never heard of again.

Each course is shared with the ancestors. The farmer takes a pitcher of water, spilling a little here and a little there until the dead have quenched their thirst. He also gives a little of everything to the family loa. Then the calabashes are set out on a bench or table reserved for the dead, and this food is not disturbed. Food for the marassas is set out separately on the ground in three small *couis,* or gourd dishes.

The family ancestors whose good will has made the harvest possible
having been taken care of, the food is now shared among the extended
family and the friends who helped in the fields. Later there are prayers
[782] to the loa, the saints, and God, led by the houngan or a prêt' savane. To
[776] finish the affair, there may be Juba-type dances for the older people, while
[535] the children watch or play *gage* games.

[524] Only after this service are the farmer and his family and his *coumbite* (mutual labor group), if he belongs to one, free to go out and harvest the rice.[4]

243 These feasts of the rice and yam harvests are not of New World origin.
243 Similar harvest festivals for yams or rice are held over a wide area of West
796 Africa. There, as in Haiti, the fundamental concern is with the family
769 ancestors, whose good will must be constantly nourished so that the rains
171 continue to fall, the crops flourish, and human beings remain fertile.
Among the Ashanti of Ghana, for example, the yam and rice harvests are

[4] [Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro. Cf. P. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

534 but it wasn't a genuine assotor and the loa didn't come. The drummer beat
796 the assotor, but none of the loa came. As he played, the stick kept falling
778 out of his hand. This was a bad signal (omen). None of the people got
787 loa in their heads. The houngan was in a great sweat, but nothing happened. Another houngan came after the third day and told him to bring the service to an end. He did that. They threw the false assotor away and no one would touch it.

534 "To make an assotor, there is first a service. The houngan goes into the
796 woods to find a great tree that is suitable. The trunk must be big enough
778 so that the drum is at least as tall as a man. Most assotors are six feet high
● 782 or more. The houngan must buy the tree from Maît' Grand Bois, the loa
787 who is Master of the Forest. There is a service under the tree, a goat or a
(776) bull is killed, and the houngan places money on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. Then Maît' Grand Bois mounts his horses. He enters the head of the houngénicon or the laplace. Sometimes he rides the houngan himself. He is very rough with his horses. But if he accepts the money, the houngan has the tree cut down, and he has an assotor drum made. When the drum is finished, a special stick must be made to beat it. Again they go to the woods. They carry the great assotor drum with them. There is singing but no dancing or drumming. They find a tree from which they will cut the drumstick, and there is a service. The houngan must buy the branch from which the drumstick will be made. He offers money to Maît' Grand Bois, the same as before. He spills a little water on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. He holds a candle in his hand. They sing to Maît' Grand Bois to let them have the stick. Maît' Grand Bois is the master of all the trees, but he is thinking also of the other loa and how they feel about it. On the Island Below the Water he consults with them. If he agrees to give the stick, he makes it known by mounting some of the hounsi, or the houngan, or maybe the man who will be the special assotor drummer. Then they cut down the branch and make the drumstick.

534 "The assotor drum is not dedicated to Ogoun or Èzilie or any other sin-
778 gle loa. If it is baptized, it is given its own name, Assotor. The spirit of
776 the assotor is multiple, for it is the *rappel* for all loa everywhere. The spirit of the assotor is called Assotor, and it is a kind of loa, but it is not one loa but all loa.

534 "In the assotor service, all loa come. Ogoun, Damballa, Legba, Tijean
796 Pétro, Dan Pétro, Gèdé, Maît' Cimitière, they all come. The big loa come
778 and the little loa, the chiefs and their escortes. Every big loa has an escorte
776 of twenty-one smaller loa. Some of the smaller loa have their own escortes. Damballa comes crawling like a snake. Makanda comes crawling like a snake. Ogoun comes fighting, chewing on nails or anything iron. Badé

comes quietly. Pié Cassé comes crawling because of his broken feet. Each loa comes in his own way. 534 776 778 776 [784]

"First there is dancing for the Congo and Pétro loa. There is dancing for the Kanga and Ibo nation. Last of all is Dahomé, for the assotor belongs to the Dahomé nation, and Dahomé is the host.

"The assotor service is the biggest of all services. It last fifteen days. Old people say that once there were services lasting more than twenty days. Every day, animals are killed—bulls, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys—all according to the loa who are there to be fed. When Moundongue is fed, a dog's ears are clipped in his honor, because Moundongue is fond of dogs. More happens in the assotor mangé than all the rest of the year. Dahomé is host to the other nations, so the Rada service comes last. But the assotor drum is the host even to Dahomé, and it is fed last of all. [782] ●

"The assotor drum is dressed in the finest of clothing and kerchiefs during the mangé. It is the king of everything.

"When the mangé assotor is ended, when the drum has been fed, there is an immediate Mass held in church for the souls in purgatory. You don't need to have any special reason, but you must hold the Mass for all the dead. You serve coffee, sandwiches, cake, and other refreshments for all the people. 534 776 769.

"When there is no mangé going on, the assotor is kept in a special place in the hounfor. Every seven or nine months the houngan has a special *rappel* beaten for it on the Rada drums, and rum is spilled on the ground for it. It is a great responsibility to own an assotor. But it does great things for the houngan who owns it."[6] 534 778 776

SERVICE FOR MAIT' GRAND BOIS AT ANSE-À-VEAU

184. 776 Orthodox tradition in the region of Anse-à-Veau places the loa Mait' Grand Bois as the most potent and venerable of deities. He is the supreme mystère, whose good will or eccentric whim determines the fortunes of all men. Somewhat subsidiary to Grand Bois, but served within the same rites, are two other non-Dahomé loa—Moundongue (of Congo origin) and Ibo. Older people of Anse-à-Veau regard this trilogy, along with Femme Grand Bois (the wife of Mait' Grand Bois), as the core of "Guinée" ritual. There is also a second group of deities, consisting primarily of Ogoun Feraille, Ézilie, and Fréda Dahomé; these loa are of the Dahomey family and are regarded as somewhat less important. Should services for any of them be held, they follow rites for the Grand Bois constellation. People in this region hold that there is only one Ibo loa, one Moundongue, one Ogoun, and one Ézilie, each of them with many names or manifestations. Legba, the Dahomean spirit of procreation,

[6] [For footnote, see Category 116, p. 351. --Analyst]

184 the gate, and the crossroads, is not regarded in the same light as the other
776 loa but as a messenger and interceder, and as the crossroads protector. He
it is who helps in the placation of the major gods, and who guards
people against accident, chance, and evil spirits on the highway.

796 In traditional form, services for Mait' Grand Bois and Femme Grand
782 Bois are conducted by the family without the aid of a houngan, under
776 the direction of the oldest male member of the family. The rites begin
on a Thursday. With a tiny bell in his hand, the elder who directs
the service (he is called ***grand famille***) calls upon Mait' Grand Bois to
come and receive his feast. The procedures are solemn. The grand
[787] famille and the family sing. At last Grand Bois enters the head of the
old man who is conducting the rites. Then the sacrificial animals are brought forward and killed, and the women take the meat and begin the cooking of the mangé. While the food is cooking, the family sits and waits. Sometimes the grand famille begins a song, in which others join. The cooking takes a long while. Sometime during the night, when the food is ready, it is placed in two baskets—one for Maît' Grand Bois and one for his wife, Femme Grand Bois. Into each basket goes meat, corn meal, rice, bread, cookies, peanut cakes, cassava, and other delicacies. The two baskets are hung by ropes from the roof of the tonnelle, or from the branch of a tree. During the entire night, none of the family eats. Mâit' Grand Bois and his wife partake of the feast as they please. At six o'clock in the morning, the baskets are taken down, and the family is free to eat what the loa have left for them.

When the food is gone, the bones that are left are carried to a nearby stream and washed until they are white and shining. The bones are then placed in a large calabash bowl. Sweet-scented leaves from special
trees are placed in the bowl with the bones, and water is added. The
[783] mixture becomes a ritual lotion, or "bath." The entire family kneels
before the liquid, which they rub on their faces, heads, arms, hands, legs,
and feet. When the ritual bathing is over, they sing:

[539] La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Cérémonie là c'est fini! [Ex. 41]	The ceremony is finished!

Afterward, each member of the family places a small coin in the calabash dish with the bones and leaves, and the residue is then buried in a deep
hole at a crossroads. A heavy post (*borne*) is erected at the site, with
[211] markings to indicate the date of the service, and the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4,
each representing a year. Every year one of the numbers is checked off, and at the end of four years another service for Maît' Grand Bois and Femme Grand Bois is held.

If it should happen that on the appointed day four years later the 796
family is unable to hold the regular feast for Grand Bois, the grand 782
famille goes to the tree sacred to the loa, with a bottle of *siro'* and other 776
token gifts. He explains the difficulties of the family; he tells the loa [778]
that it has been a bad year, that the crops have been poor, and that the
family has not been able to accumulate enough money to buy sacrificial
animals. He asks Grand Bois for a six-month postponement. The loa [787]
agrees to the postponement, making his intentions clear through various
signs when the grand famille is possessed. "Grand Bois is a good loa,"
people say, "but if you fail to meet your obligations to him he will be
very stern. If you don't keep your promise to him, he may seize you
[i.e., kill you]."

When the rites for Maît' Grand Bois are finished, services for Ogoun
and the Dahomé deities may be held, beginning on Friday and running
through the week end. The Ogoun service is a festive affair. There is
much singing and dancing, and early on Saturday morning the sacrificial
bull is dressed and decorated with red and blue kerchiefs. Red and
blue ribbons are tied to his horns, and he is led on a grand tour to
various places, including Ogoun's tree. The drummers walk behind
him, and after them members of the family, some dancing, some singing, [787]
and some mounted by the loa Ogoun. The procession passes three
times around the cemetery, then heads back toward the family *habitation.*
When the participants reach the tree sacred to Legba, they sing to this
loa, invoking him to "ouvri bayè pou' moin" (open the gate for me).
Finally, when the procession reaches the *habitation,* the sacrificial bull
is killed. After Ogoun has been served his mangé, the rites are terminated
with an *action de grâce.*

Near Anse-à-Veau there is a dried-up spring. It is said that many 173-
years ago during a big service for Maît' Grand Bois a man mounted by 796
this loa rushed to the foot of a large tree and began clawing at the 776
ground. He dug a hole there with his hands, and when it was only 782
a few feet deep, water began to flow. The members of the société later [787]
enlarged the hole and lined it with stone. It was discovered that a giant
crab was living in this water. One year, a service to Maît' Grand Bois
was missed. The crab disappeared from the spring, and soon the water
stopped flowing. "Grand Bois gives," the people say, "but if he is not
remembered he also takes back."

Possession by the Loa Pinga Maza

On the outskirts of Port-au-Prince there is a hounfor dedicated to the 776
loa Pinga Maza, also known by the name Bakulu Baka. He is a ferocious [346]
and fearsome spirit of the Pétro family who is known for his propensity

000
772 of Haiti. But the route to it is through water. When the Haitians say
776 "under the water" they do not mean under the sea. The ocean is re-
823 garded as the special domain of Agwé, La Sirène, and a few related
778 deities, but it has nothing to do with most loa. "Under the water"
specifically means under the springs, the rivers, and the fresh-water lakes.
Fresh water has the greatest of significance in relation to most of the
Vodoun deities.

When a loa comes to visit his Haitian children he comes by way of the *chimin dleau* (the water road)—that is to say, by way of the river, the waterfall, or the spring. Because the spring is the primary source of fresh water, it is the most direct means of contact with the land of the loa. Tales are heard everywhere of persons who, drawing water from the spring at night, heard the voices of loa or the sound of singing and drumming coming up from somewhere below. And virtually all the tales about human beings who visited the land of the loa describe them as descending into a river or disappearing into a waterfall.

The loa are accustomed to traveling by the "water road." And in all aspects of the Vodoun service, this "water road" is refreshed and replenished. When the road is dry, contact with the loa is diminished. When it is moist, the loa travel easily.

776 Thus, the houngan constantly uses water to entice and invite the
782 deities. He holds a glass or pitcher of water at the center pole of his
823 peristyle. He extends it toward the four cardinal points. He spills
778 water at the foot of the center pole. He spills water in the hounfor at
the foot of the *pé*, or altar. He sets a pitcher of water at the gateway of
his *habitation*. And often, during a service, he pours a pathway of
water in the dust from his gateway into his peristyle. Within nearly
[346] every hounfor there is at least one *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to the loa
who is the *mait' caille*, the master of the house. These pools are care-
fully filled with water drawn from the springs. They are places of rest
and refreshment for the deities whose names or portraits are inscribed
on the walls above.

796 Sometimes rites and services are held at the site of the spring, the
778 houngan and his entourage marching down to it from the hounfor for
823 the occasion. So, too, there are annual pilgrimages to waterfalls such
[788] [789] as Saut d'Eau, where the loa mount their "horses" in profusion.

Within the hounfor, during a service, the cult priest and the servitors
782 pour "libations" of water on the earth, so that the loa may be refreshed.
796 And virtually without end, the hounfor is the scene of ritual ceremonies
823 in which the loa is bathed and thus "renewed" in the heads of his
778 servitors.[?]

[?] [For footnote, see category 116, p. 351.--Analyst]

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The importance of water in Vodoun has a fundamentally West African 771
character. Among the Yoruba and the Ashanti and in Dahomey, for 823
example, water rites are a significant aspect of religious ritual. Hersko- 796
vits notes the frequency of religious pilgrimages to streams in West 778
Africa.

> In one instance, at Abeokuta, a bedecked procession of worshipers left a shrine atop a high hill, followed a long path to the riverside over two miles away, and returned before the ceremonies could be carried out at the shrine of the god. On one occasion, in Dahomey, the bed of the sacred stream run dry was "filled" from nearby wells so that this water could be ritually redrawn for use in an especially important ceremony. Among the Ashanti, pilgrimages to Lake Bosumtwe and other sacred bodies of water regularly occur. And it is on such occasions that the spirit of the river or lake or sea manifests itself, by "entering the head" of the devotee and causing him to fling himself, possibly possessed, into the water.[8]

So it is also in Haiti, where possession at the river's edge may cause 823
the devotee to leap into the river. At Saut d'Eau, possessed persons 787
plunge into the waterfall without regard for their safety, being in the 778
care of the loa who have mounted them.

Into this water complex the Christian rite of baptism has been easily 177
absorbed, providing merely a new act of veneration for water and its 797
properties. In the Haitian mind baptism is not far removed from the 823
lavé tête ritual, the washing of the head, or the *rafraîchi tête*, the "re- 778
freshing" of the head, both of which are acts in propitiation of the 782 ●
loa.[9] So related is the baptismal concept in the Haitian mind, that the 795
term "baptize" is used to describe the lavé tête; it is said that the loa is 851
being "baptized." So also are drums "baptized," not to menton yams, and
even the hounfor itself.

MARRIAGE TO A LOA

Although the term *hounsi* (spirit wife, or wife of the spirit) is applied 588
to a large class of servitors of the Vodoun temple, only a small number [794]
of servitors ever pass through rites which give them a husband-wife or wife-husband relationship with a loa. Reasons for these mystic marriages vary, but usually the rituals take place upon the prescription of a cult priest who interprets the will of the deities concerned. Most of the mystic marriages of which I have heard have taken place in the general area of Port-au-Prince and the Cul-de-Sac Plain. In some other areas of Haiti it appears that no such rites have taken place locally within the memory of the elder inhabitants. One aged man living near Belladère declared: "It [marriage to a loa] is impossible. People serve loa, they do not marry them. A man does not marry his burro. A loa

[8] [Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 233. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. --Analyst]

[9] [It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. --Analyst]

special future help and consideration from the loa (including the cessa- 588
tion of the illnesses or other misfortunes that have led to the marriage). 554
A man (or woman) united with a loa in "matrimony" is "stronger" (*plus fort*) in his relationship to his environment and to other people. For this reason, the initiative for a mystic marriage does not always come from a loa. An ambitious person may seek such a marriage to strengthen his hand, to provide protection against other deities or human enemies, or to gain wealth or position. One observer, Odette Mennesson Rigaud, expresses the opinion that in such instances the marriage "is no longer a religious union of mystic love, but a magic pact."[10] The implicit element of "pact" is so evident in all mystic marriages, even when the initiative comes from the loa, that the distinction is not easily appreciated. However, persons suspected of "pushing" for a marriage with a loa are regarded as presumptuous or reckless, and often they are believed to have hidden motives. It is felt by many that the benefits of such a union can be only temporary and that catastrophe will ultimately follow.

A human party to marriage with a loa is deeply committed. He is 588
subject to jealousy and anger on the part of his mystic mate. His be- 782
havior in the hounfor as in his daily life must be beyond the loa's re- 787
proach. He must avoid possession by other loa. And he must fulfill endless obligations. Sometimes the prospect of such binding ties is more than a man (or woman) is ready to face, and through the intercession of a strong houngan the loa may be induced to withdraw his demand for marriage. In that event, a special service is held, in the course of which the person buys his freedom with promises of special gifts and feasts for the deity.

One young man I knew was caught in a special dilemma—the houngan 159
and the loa on one side, the Protestant Church on the other. The man, 588
named Maurice, came from the mountains near Léogane. He was 753
married but had no children. His wife's family, still living in Léogane, was Protestant. Maurice himself was a follower of Vodoun, and nominally a Catholic. When his wife was afflicted with a long series of headaches and earaches, Maurice consulted a houngan of Port-au-Prince. The houngan said that the loa Ayida Wèdo was demanding marriage with Maurice, and that the wife's illnesses were an indication of jealousy.

At the same time, the wife's parents came from Léogane and insisted that the girl's illnesses were brought about by God because Maurice was a follower of Vodoun. They demanded that he sever all his connections with Vodoun and become a Protestant.

After considerable anxiety, Maurice "purged" himself of Vodoun and [783]

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[10] [Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voudoun 'Loa'," in Appendix A of Deren, Divine Horsemen, p. 264. Cf. p. 351, category 116. -- Analyst]

6. Songs of the Peristyle

The songs that are sung in the peristyle are virtually numberless and 533
have a wide range of themes. In general, they are in the spirit of sup- 782 ●
plication or placation. Preponderantly they relate in some way to the 794
deities. A loa may be described, invoked, or called upon to perform 776
certain deeds. He may be cajoled, joked with, and even criticized. But
it is all a family affair. The servitors and the *fidèles* are the loa's "chil-
dren," his "horses," his "leaves in the woods." The loa, the spirits of [769]
the dead, and the living members of the cult are all members of the
same "nation." Whether supplication or admonition, the songs of the
peristyle and the hounfor all have an intimate character. The affairs of
the loa are the affairs of the société. What concerns one individual con-
cerns all.

The themes of the songs have to do with the drama of the cult ritual, 533
the coming and going of the deities, sickness and death, the welfare 794
of the dead, and the behavior of the living. 796

The cult service is a dramatic presentation which synchronizes and 776
brings into sharp focus the heritage of religious and folk beliefs. The songs describe and evaluate what is going on. Sometimes they are cryptic and tangent, but to those participating and those watching they are clues. As the action is usually related and progressive, so are the songs. Each song has its own place and its own meaning. One song is not readily interchangeable with another. Each service has its appropriate music. So does each developing phase of the hounfor ritual.

Some of the songs are addressed to the loa; others seem to be the words of the loa themselves. In many of the songs there is an implicit dialogue between one or more loa and the singers. This dialogue is not rendered in a form which is immediately understandable to a stranger. There is a constantly shifting point of view, so that sometimes the words are third-person comments about the loa or the situation,

533 sometimes they are the words of the deity, sometimes words addressed
794 to the deity. The name of the loa may appear anywhere in the song, as
796 both an invocational word and a rhythmic device, with the result that
776 unless one is aware of the song structure he may lose the sense and
533 intent of the words. In these two lines, for example:

539 Master Agwé comes from the sea,
776 My cannon is loaded.

796 The first line describes what happens, from the standpoint of a third person; the second line is a statement by the loa Agwé. Or, take this single line:

Marie Louise oh, we are mixed up!

Here Marie Louise seems to be the person addressed, but in fact it is Marie Louise who is talking. Again:

I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun!

It is not Ogoun who is addressed; the words are his own.

As in nonreligious songs, there is a pattern stanza which is repeated over and over again. As the song goes on, there may be variations for interest and certain embellishments, but by and large the form remains constant. In religious singing there are relatively few examples of songs which progress from one idea to another. When the theme has been stated, that is the song.

533 One of the preliminary songs in many ritual services is a greeting to
539 the men and women of the société who are present. It is an *ochan,* or
794 salute of welcome, and comes before the loa themselves are addressed:

576	Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
	M'apé mandé nou!	I ask you!
	Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
	M'apé mandé nou	I ask you
	Qui gens nous yé! [Ex. 42]	What people are we?

The answer to the question is implicit, for they are the people of the société, members of the Arada "nation" or Anago "nation," as the case may be.

782 In almost any service of the Dahomey "nation" the first supplicatory
776 song is addressed to Legba, the keeper of the gate, the guardian of the
533 crossroads, and the "go-between" who intercedes with other loa in the
794 affairs of men. The first appeal to Legba is to open the gate, over which
he is master, so that the voices of supplication may be heard and understood. The open gate also provides access for other loa to the service.

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Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ago! 776
Ou wè Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ouvri bayè! 533
M'apé rentré quand ma tourné, 539
Ma salut loa yo! 794

Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, *ago!*
You see, Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, open the gate!
I will enter when I return,
I salute the loa!

[793]
[823]
[778]

After this appeal, or sometimes while it is being sung, the houngan spills a little water on the earth at the base of the po'teau mitan. It is an inducement for the loa to "enter," for the loa reside "below the water" and their passage into the hounfor is made easier by water. The houngan may spill his water in a long path from the entrance of the peristyle to the po'teau mitan, or extend his pitcher invitingly to the four points of the compass. Then, perhaps, another song is sung to Legba:

Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Ou même qui porté drapeau,
C'est ou même ka paré soleil pou' loa yo!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
You who carry the flag,
It is you who shade the loa from the sun!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

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As the ritual gets under way, there may be a general song of welcome to all the loa of the cult, such as this one:

Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Oh bonjou' oh bonjou' loa moin! [Ex. 43]

Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Oh, good day, oh, good day my loa!

When the service is well in progress, the songs may describe the qualities of the deities—their character, behavior and needs. If it is Balindjo, for example, the song may advertise that persons with this loa in their heads are immune to poison:

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun oh!

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh, Ogoun, oh!

Sobo, too, demands his drums as he arrives, as well as all the other paraphernalia for his ritual: 533 539 776 794 796

Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé hounsi 'Llada!	Sobo asks for his Allada hounsi!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé tambou' Rada!	Sobo asks for his Arada drums!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé pouin Allada!	Sobo asks for his Allada magic!
Coté yo coté yo? [Ex. 53]	Where are they, where are they?

When more than one loa comes into the service at the same time there is confusion. Each loa is supposed to await his turn, so that the ritual and the dance may be conducted in an orderly way. Sometimes, however, two or more dieties come in at once, throwing the orderly process out of gear. This song takes note of the simultaneous arrival of the loa Adja, Loko, Sobo, Sedje, and others.

Adja non mélé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mélé!
Non mélé Papa Loko, non mélé jodi-à!

Adja non mélé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mélé!
Non mélé Sedje assez non mélé jodi-à!

Adja non mélé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mélé!
Non mélé kilé oudé Nèg' Sobo non mélé jodi-à! [Ex. 54]

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Papa Loko, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Sedje, enough, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed all the time, Nèg' Sobo, we are mixed up today!

When the loa come in en masse this way, some are asked to retire so that the service can proceed smoothly. In a similar instance, the deity Marie Louise is willing to withdraw from the scene but demands that a present or sacrifice be given to her first. [782]

As the loa Mambo Ayida of the Guinée pantheon leaves the hounfor to return to Africa, her "children" ask her not to stay there too long. And they ask her to bring back to Haiti with her some good magic for use in the hounfor:

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Mambo Ayida é!
Pral nan Guinée-à, pinga ou misé-à m'tendé!
Si ou joind bon ouanga wa po'té!
Si ou joind bon lotion wa po'té! [Ex. 59]

Mambo Ayida *é!*
Go to Africa, take care not to stay, I am waiting!
If you find a good ouanga, bring it!
If you find a good lotion, bring it!

Giving food to the loa is a focal point in religious rituals. Many songs describe the sacrifice, signify that the loa are waiting for their food, or otherwise dramatize this significant activity. In the following song the deity Damballa asks for the goat with which he is to be fed.

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Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang li mandé!
Oh assez! [Ex. 60]

Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood *é!*
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood *é!*
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood he asks for!
Oh, enough!

For Ogoun they sometimes sing:

Papa Ogoun qui gain' yun mangé
Tout moune pas mangé li!
Enhé enhé, oh! [Ex. 61]

It is Papa Ogoun who has a feast,
Not everyone may eat it!
Enhé enhé, oh!

But sometimes Ogoun is dissatisfied that there is no feast ready for him, and he complains.

533 Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
539 Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
776 A pas m'blessé Ferei,	Now I am hurt, Ferei,
M'pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
782 M'pas wè sang'm Mait Ogoun,	I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun,
794 Moin pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
796 M'pas wè sang'm Badagry,	I don't see my blood, Badagry
Moin pas wè sang moin là! [Ex. 62]	I don't see my blood here!

The loa Moundongue, like Damballa, likes goat meat, and it can be cooked in two ways:

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue oh!
Oh Moundongue oh yè yè yè!
Moundongue mangé cabrit boulé,
Moundongue mangé cabrit boucané! [Ex. 63]

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue, oh!
Oh, Moundongue, oh, *yè yè yè!*
Moundongue eats boiled goat,
Moundongue eats roasted goat!

Or again, the servitors may sing:

Coto passé na ba'ou mangé, oh Ti Moundongue nà!
Coto passé na ba'ou mangé, Moundongue nà! [Ex. 64]

Wherever you are, we give you food, oh, Ti Moundongue there!
Wherever you are, we give you food, Moundongue there!

[787] [789] The loa Adja also has animal sacrifices and special dishes for his mangé, but sometimes he—and the "horses" he mounts—will eat broken glass:

Oh Adja mangé bounda dèmijon!
Adja véco' véco'!
Adja mangé bounda dèmijon!
Adja véco' véco'! [Ex. 65]

Oh, Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!
Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!

For the loa Ianman Ibo the proper sacrifice is a rooster, and the deity declares:

Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq!
Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Waille waille waille! [Ex. 66]

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[784]

Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation!
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock!
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation!
Waille waille waille!

The Ibo service is often a strictly family affair rather than a broad community ritual. The family replies to the Ibo loa in the following song.

La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Vin' payé sang!	Comes to pay blood!
La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Ibo Lazile volonté! [Ex. 41]	It is Ibo Lazile's wish!

The loa Nago frankly tells the people that if they want to come to his house (his shrine, or the hounfor) they will have to pay something for the privilege:

Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Fau'm payé bonbon pou' ça!	You have to give cookies for that!
Anago Nago!	Anago Nago!
Vin' wè coté'm demeuré! [Ex. 67]	Come see where I live!

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The "dead" spirit Gèdé Nimbo, the guardian or master of the cemetery, who often engages in bizarre activities which poke fun at the codes of social behavior, is sometimes regarded as a special protector of children. Precisely because he is overlord of all that has to do with the grave, his good will is sought, particularly in behalf of the young; and in many services of the Nago rites his protection is bought by money gifts:

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[533]

Gèdé main la'gent,
M'apé ba ou la'gent la'gent,
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!

Gèdé, take the money,
I will give you money, money,
I will give you money to guard the children!
I will give you money to guard the children!

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In the course of the ceremonies when, from time to time, the honored loa of the occasion enters into the head of one of the servitors, the houngan will place in the hands of the mounted person a lighted candle and a pitcher of water. The possessed servitor approaches the sacred center post and spills a little water on the ground for the deity. After certain other rituals, the houngan, or one of his assistants, conducts the mounted "horse" into the hounfor to the altar. In the following song, as the possession comes on, there is a call for a lighted candle.

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[539]

Trois fé trois citron oh! 533
Trois fé trois citron oh! 539
Moin dit rwo, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 776
Trois fé trois racine oh! 626
Moin dit oui, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 796
Gainyain bassin moin trois racine tombé ladans, 793
Quand ou wa' blié fau' ramassé chongé! [Ex. 76]

Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
I say *rwo*, one day you are going to need me!
Three leaves, three roots, oh!
I say yes, one day you are going to need me!
I have my pond into which three roots fall,
When you wish to forget you will have to remember!

In another song the houngan warns against ingratitude on the part of persons for whom special magical services have been carried out:

Ouanga ça oh ouanga chaud!
Ouanga ça ouanga chaud!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou fâché!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou fâché! [Ex. 77]

This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!

Somberly and in metaphor, the deity Kitta Démambré speaks of an unhappy event which occurred in the town of Léogane, and warns those concerned that it must not happen again: 533 539 776 626

Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça 'core oh!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé oh!
Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça encore oh! [Ex. 78]

Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again, oh!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again!

An unnamed spirit warns that the moment for placation has come and suggests that calling on him after he has gone from the *pavillon* of the houngan Deréa would be of no use. 782 ●

The loa Aïson complains more vigorously of the bad behavior of human beings: 533 539 726 626

Aïson Aïson!
Dépis temps y'ap pa'lé sou moin!
Cosé ça yo gainyain?
Bouche à yo paya paya!
Djeule à yo pèdè pèdè!
Cosé ça pou' yo pa'don oh? [Ex. 83]

Aïson, Aïson!
For a long time they have been talking about me!
What's wrong with them?
Their mouths go *paya paya!*
Their jaws go *pèdè pèdè!*
What is the excuse?

Even on routine business the loa are inclined to be petulant, or to protest that they have been mistreated, that their followers gossip about them, or that they are not ardent enough. Here the deity Simbi en des Eaux complains bitterly that she is not loved by her servitors, the "leaves in the woods," and asks a hounsi named Lolo for news to take to spirits of the ancestors who live "below the water": 533 539 726 626 794

Fé nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nan point raimain pas mandé quitté!
Fé nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nan point raimain pas mandé quitté!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Qui sorti en bas dleau!
Gardé ça yo fai moin!
M'dit Lolo, ba moin nouvelle pou'm ba yo! [Ex. 84]

Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Who comes from below the water!
See what they do to me!
I say, Lolo, give me the news to give them!

But if the loa complain about the behavior of their followers, the servitors also may complain. Songs sung in the hounfor may chide the deities for antisocial deeds, for forgetting their "children," or for carelessness. In the following song the spirit Malé Grand Chimin is criticized for mounting his "horses" with such fury that they are thrown about 533 539 726 794 787 782

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violently. The hounsi complain that Mait' Grand Chimin treats them as though they were flour being ground in a mill:

Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit na bougie moin!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit na bougie moin! [Ex. 85]

Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!

533
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531
744
755

When there is sickness within the société there may be songs for the absent ones. Here is a song for an ailing hounsi:

Main allé wè là, hounsi malade oh!
Main allé wè ça, hounsi malade oh!
Main allé wè houngan, hounsi malade oh! [Ex. 86]

I am going to see there, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see it, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see, houngan, the hounsi is sick, oh!

Again, the members of the société call upon Ogoun, or St. Jacques, to help one of their number who is sick:

St. Jacques maré chwal li,	St. Jacques ties his horse,
Li pas dit personne oh,	He tells no one, oh,
Véyé li pou' moin!	Take care of him for me!
Li mét guinyain verre,	He may have worms,
Li mét guinyain maline nan dos,	He may have sores on his back,
St. Jacques oh!	St. Jacques, oh!
Ba li lavie pou' moin! [Ex. 87]	Protect him for me!

796
776
273

Ogoun is the dispenser of rum, and in virtually all Ogoun rituals rum is at some time or another in evidence. Sometimes rum is poured into a hot iron pot and bursts into flame. The iron pot is described as Ogoun's

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P 112-AA]

133
764

● [782] 37. *A small graveyard in the mountains at Furcy. The little alcoves in the tombs are for food offerings on special anniversaries.*

312

[776] 38. *Stone and brick covering of spring on Morne l'Hôpital believed to have been constructed in colonial times. Many persons have testified that here the voices of the loa have been heard bubbling up with the water.*

291
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● 782
778
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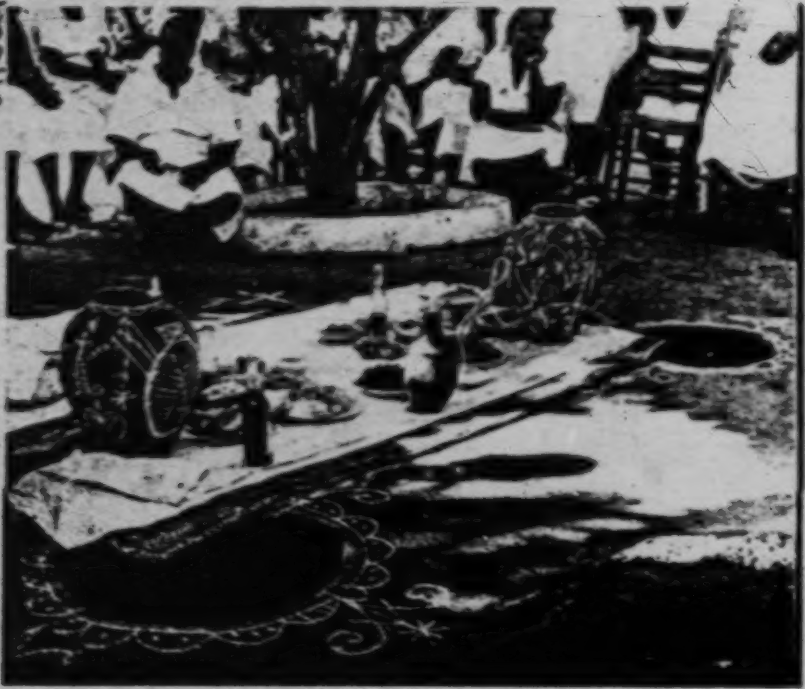
415

31. *An Ibo service in the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Laid out on the mat is a feast for the Ibo loa. The houngan ritually feeds the deities by placing food in the holes at each end of the mat. Designs on the pots are the symbolic patterns found generally in vèvès. The tree in the background, surrounded by a low curbing, is sacred to the loa.*



Qua'm perd' un garçon moin jain' l'aut' oh! 533*
Ma rélé, 539*
Oh qua'm perdit manman moin ma crié! [Ex. 102] 593

I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!
I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!
When I lost a man I found another, oh!
When I lost a man I found another, oh!
I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!

Protest or complaint songs are sometimes directed against no one in particular but simply call the attention of listeners to the singer's misfortunes. In many such songs the president or one of the deities is mentioned by name. The singer in this way implicitly places responsibility for help. In the following song, one complains of hunger, another theme that runs throughout Haitian folklore and Haitian life.

533*
539*
261

Rwo! Président qui voyé rélé'm!
Moin pas bwè moin pas mangé!
M'pas bwè moin pas mangé!
Oh m'pas bwè moin pas mangé!
Président qui voyé rélé'm rwo!
M'pas bwè moin pas mangé! [Ex. 103]

Rwo! * The President sends for me!
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
Oh, I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
The President sends for me, *rwo!*
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!

Here the loa Ogoun Balindjo is called upon to take note of prying, insincere people who come to a person's house, observe what is going on, and go away to gossip:

533*
539*
521
[976]
[982] ●

Ogoun Balindjo
Yo vini ga'dé'm
Pou' y'allé valé oh!
Ogoun Balindjo
Li yé wè bouche pé oh!
Ogoun Balindjo
Pou wè yo vini ga'dé moin? [Ex. 104]

Ogoun Balindjo
They come to look at me

---

* An exclamation.

*533 *539 521

To go away and talk, oh!
Ogoun Balindjo
The eyes see, the mouth is closed, oh! *
Ogoun Balindjo
Don't you see they come to look at me?

*533 *539 ● [782] Or again, the loa Ogoun and Loko Attiso are invoked to witness a person's misery, though in this song the cause is not explained:

Ogoun oh ga'dé misè!
Papa Ogoun ou wa ga'dé misè!
Ga'dé misè oh Lok' Attiso ga'dé misè là yé! [Ex. 105]

Ogoun, oh, look at my misery!
Papa Ogoun, you will look at my misery!
Look at my misery, oh, Loko Attiso, look at my misery here!

*533 *539 626 The impulse to criticism most often stems from personal injuries, but on occasion songs are used as a community affair to exert social pressures on an errant member of the neighborhood:

Frè' Jean-Pierre wa quitté bwè tafia!
Frè' Jean-Pierre ti moune yo touné!

Brother Jean-Pierre, stop drinking tafia! †
Brother Jean-Pierre, the little children are naked!

*533 *539 626 578 [522] Although discussions of neighbors' affairs tend to have this moral tone, a vast number of songs are pure gossip and are sung for their ribald or wry humor, as the case may be. In some the objects of ridicule are named; in others the allusions are indirect, so that only those who are familiar with the situation will know the people concerned. Open quarreling often provides amusement and substance for satire. The community can sense petulance, stupidity, and stubbornness through a confusion of charges and countercharges, and is quick to burlesque them. Thus there are public pressures against petty and needless disturbances. The following song refers to a dispute over ownership of an unnamed article.

Moin dit c'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
Moin dit c'est zaffai grand mounè! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
Moin dit n'ap chaché li! Ciyé!
N'ap prend li! Ciyé!
Moin dit c'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé!
C'est bagaille grand moune! Ciyé! [Ex. 106]

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* That is to say, the eyes should see and the mouth should be closed.
† An alcoholic drink.

776 a "nation" in the Dahomé rites; and the Ibo group, though still distinct,
184 is frequently allied with the Dahomé rites or the Guinée rites.

794 The following list does not pretend to include all the loa known in
Haiti. It is doubtful that a complete list could ever be compiled, in
view of the continual generation of new deities and the constant cross-
[128] fertilization between "nations." The loa are grouped here according to
most widespread usage. There are contradictions from which there is
no possible escape, and these general groupings will not necessarily
correspond to the concepts and practices of any specific locality. It is intended here to give a broad and generalized view.

128 Under "The Vodoun Pantheon" I have placed constellations of deities
776 of Dahomean and Yoruban origin, along with others that are clearly
794 identified with Vodoun rites. Under "The Congo and Pétro Pantheons"
I have listed the Congo-Guinée loa—consisting mainly of deities associated with Central Africa and deities affiliated with the Pétro rites. Ibo and Kanga loa are grouped together, because in many regions of Haiti the two pantheons appear to be interlocked. A separate listing is given for the Simbi family of water deities in view of their ambivalence; they are sometimes found in the Pétro group and sometimes in the Dahomé, according to local practice.

THE VODOUN PANTHEON

776 **Damballa Wèdo, or Dan Wèdo.** One of the most venerable of Haitian loa. He is
171 generally recognized as the husband of Ayida Wèdo, though occasionally the two
deities are merged in a personality called Damballa-Ayida. The concept of a single identity for Damballa and Ayida conforms to Dahomean belief. In both Haiti and West Africa, Damballa is identified with the rainbow and is symbolized as a snake.[n]
In Haiti he is associated also with rainfall, springs, and fertility. He is sometimes
[782] described as "white," and the proper food offering to him is a white chicken. Persons
[787] possessed by Damballa usually take on stylized characteristics of snakes. Along with
[177] many other important loa, he has become identified with characters in Christian
religious belief. There are, in fact, "two" Damballa Wèdos. One, identified with
Moses, comes in talking; the other, identified with St. Patrick, never talks. Food
[782] offerings for the St. Patrick version of Damballa consist of eggs, flour, sugar, and
almond syrup. Damballa remains one of the chief gods of the Dahomey cult in Cuba, and he survived into the last century in New Orleans under the name Danny.

[822] **Ayida Wèdo.** Generally regarded in Haiti as the wife of Damballa, Ayida is also
symbolized by snake and rainbow, and her color, like Damballa's, is "white." In Dahomey and Nigeria, Ayida is known as a male rather than a female spirit and is regarded there as the same divinity as Damballa, or Dji. In Dahomey, Ayida Wèdo was the great serpent who held up the world. According to one myth, the Creator of the World assigned to Ayida the task of holding up the earth to keep it from falling into the sea. The great serpent coiled himself, tail in mouth, and lay below

[n] [Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 245 ff. Cf. p. 354, Category 46. --Analyst]

[The Vodoun pantheon]

the earth like the carrying pad that women wear to support bundles on their heads. 776
Whenever Ayida Wèdo shifted his position there were earthquakes.[2] When the rainbow appeared after a rain it was said that Ayida had come out from under the earth to drink of the fresh water. [171] [821]

Damballa Grand Chimin (Damballa of the Highway). Another manifestation of Damballa as a protector of those on long journeys. [484]

Damballa Verre. Another manifestation of Damballa.

Dimici Wèdo. Considered to be the daughter of Damballa. The ending of her name (*-ci*) suggests that at one time she may have been considered a wife rather than a daughter.

Doki Wèdo. A member of Damballa's family.

Agão Wèdo. A member of Damballa's family. Said to be a "work loa" who aids men with their gardens, especially in time of illness. [241]

Ézilie Doba, or Dogba, sometimes spelled Erzulie. One of the "big" loa of the Dahomé pantheon, a symbol of purity, and sometimes identified with the Virgin Mary. Her color is white, and services to her include a ritual sweeping and sprinkling of the earth and a perfuming of the air. Food offerings to her include corn meal and eggs. Male "horses" of Ézilie are sometimes bound to her by mystic marriages, and they are obligated to refrain from sexual intercourse on certain days which belong to her. There are a number of Ézilies, regarded as members of the same family or, in some cult centers, as different manifestations of the same deity. Some Haitians regard Ézilie Doba as the ancestor of the Ézilie family and refer to her as Grand Ézilie. Note that there is a Dahomean town named Dogba at approximately 0° 6′ E., 6° 50′ N. [177] [822] [782] [787] [834] [588]

Ézilie Fréda, or Ézilie Dahomain (Dahomé), or Ézilie Fréda Dahomain. Like Ézilie Doba, she is a symbol of purity and is identified with the Virgin Mary. Mystic marriages are performed with her, and her "horses" are obligated to refrain from sexual intercourse on certain days. She is also a giver of wealth. [177] [588] [787] [834]

Ézilie Wèdo. A sister or daughter of Ézilie Doba and also related to Damballa.

Ézilie Mahol. A sister of Ézilie Fréda.

Ézilie Banda. A manifestation of Ézilie who is especially fond of the Banda dance.

Ézilie Jérouge (Red Eyes). A stern and hard Ézilie who is often identified with Pétro rather than Dahomé rites.

Aïson Fréda. A member of the Ézilie escorte, regarded as a market-place protector. In Dahomey, Aïson was a protector of all public gathering places.[3] [443] [171]

Aïson Balékété

Aïson Dleau Bolo Bosu

Maîtresse Mambo. A special form of Ézilie as priestess.

Maîtresse Espagnole, or 'Pagnole. A person mounted by this Ézilie talks only Spanish. [787] [191]

Sobo, or Sogbo. A thunder deity who hurls stones to the earth when angered. Some of the stones thrown by Sobo are regarded as the sacred residence of various loa. Sobo (or Sogbo) is a member of the original Thunder pantheon of Dahomey. 776 171

Sobo Badé, or Sogbo Badé, or simply Badé. A close relative of Sobo, regarded as the protector of the hounfor (*badé*). In Dahomey, Badé is sometimes referred to as the son of the deity Sobo.[4]

[2] [See Ellis, *The Ewe-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*, pp. 47-49; and Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 245ff. Cf. p. 354 Category 116. --Analyst]

[3] [Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 52. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. --Analyst]

[4] [Herskovits, *op. cit.*, pp. 152ff. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116. --Analyst]

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

776 **Agomme Tonnerre**, also pronounced **Abomé Tonnerre**. Another thunder loa. Abomé
(or Agbomé) is the name of an ancient capital of Dahomey.

Badessy. The wife of Sobo Badé.

So Narcisse, also called Sogo Narcisse, or simply So. A thunder loa of Dahomean
[171] origin. In Dahomey he is regarded as an offspring of Mawu and Lisa, and a member
of the Sky pantheon.

Kébiosu, or **Kébioso**. A thunder loa who, like Sobo, hurls stones to the earth.
[171] In Dahomey he is known as Xevioso and is thought to be the same deity as So. In
[766] Haiti, persons killed by lightning are thought to be enemies of Kébiosu and are
given special treatment in burial.

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776 **Agwé Woyo**, known also as **Coqui-Nan-Mer**. He is a loa of the sea; thunder and
782 lightning over the ocean are thought to be Agwé shooting his cannon. He is usually
[821] symbolized in pictures by a sailing or steam vessel. His colors are blue and white,
[822] and the primary sacrificial animal for him is a male goat. High ceremonies for
Agwé are begun in the hounfor and consummated in a sailing boat on the open sea,
from which is launched a highly decorated and stylized miniature ship containing
food for the deity. This tiny craft is known as the *barque d'Agwé*. Hounfors honoring this spirit usually have a small boat hanging from the rafters. In Dahomey,
[171] Agwé is also a sea deity and a member of the Thunder pantheon.

776 **Agwétta Woyo**. She is thought to be Agwé Woyo's wife, though in Dahomey
[171] she was considered to be his daughter.

Agwésou Wandéou. Said to be the son of Agwé.

La Sirène. Another deity of the sea, a latecomer visualized as a mermaid. La
Sirène is usually thought of as belonging to a separate family, though she is frequently served along with Agwé. Some sociétés do not recognize her at all.

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776 **Nananbouclou**, or **Nanan Bouloucou**. A loa of herbs and medicines. In Dahomey
171 this spirit was considered the grandparent of all deities, the progenitor of Mawu
and Lisa from whom all demigods are descended.[5] She is still remembered in the
Dahomey cults of Cuba.

Lissa or **Lisha**. Probably the Lisa of Dahomey, child of Nanbouclou.

Attibon Legba, or **Legba Sé**. One of the most important of Haitian loa, frequently the first one invoked in any service. He is the guardian of the gateway, the
[782] crossroads, and the highway. Cocks and male goats are his favorite foods, as in West
Africa. In Dahomean tradition, Legba is the youngest offspring of Mawu and Lisa,
the progenitors of all Dahomean deities. He is a divine trickster who is both feared
[778] and loved, a force that is capriciously malevolent or benevolent. Today, as in earlier
times in Dahomey, the image of Legba, made of clay, stands or sits before the entrance to many villages. Sometimes the image is nothing more than a mound or
column of earth symbolizing a phallus. Legba's mischief and tricks are directed
against the other deities and human beings. In Haiti, as in Dahomey, Legba is not a
personal deity. As Herskovits points out, Legba has no "character" and cannot be
[787] relied on. He is the intervener between mankind and the deities. It is in this sense
that he "opens the gate," providing a channel of communication between man and
loa; and it is for this reason that he is often supplicated first in religious ritual. In
Dahomean lore, Legba's mischief is often in the realm of sex. In ritual dances for

[5] [*Ibid*, pp. 101 ff. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. --Analyst]

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776

Agão Loko Bayè. A crossroads protector of the Loko family.
Loko Dãi Pré

Dansi Osou. Among the Tshi-speaking people of West Africa there was a spirit called Adansi, a malignant giantess.[17] [171]
Osou Jamain
Souisou Yèmain

Zombra
Mazombra
Mazombra Enpaka

Amine. An aged female loa. Sacrifices to her consist of rice, sugar cane, lima beans, and eggs. As in services for the deity Ezilie, perfumes are used during services for her. [782]

Amine Gatigal Laflambo. A member of the Amine family. Amine is the name of a tribe of Dahomey.

Amine Nago. Another member of the Amine family.

Général Clermeil, or Président Clermeil. He is said to be the "father" and patron of all light children born to dark parents. Stories are sometimes heard of men who wrongly accused their wives of infidelity because of the lightness of their children, and who were finally mounted and punished by Clermeil. [787]

Clermézine. The light-skinned daughter of the dark Général Clermeil.

The family relationships or escortes of the following deities are not clear. Some of them may belong to one or another of the foregoing groups, or to still uncited families.

Adja. A female loa associated with the arts of pharmacy. The Yoruba of Nigeria had a spirit named Adja who carried men and women off into the forest to teach them about the medicinal properties of roots and herbs.[18] In Haiti, Adja's mangé consists of cookies and chicken. Persons possessed by her sometimes eat broken glass. [171] [782] [787]

Adja Bosu, Akadja Bosu, or Kadja Bosu. This deity is also known in Dahomey. [771]

Aganman. A male deity characterized as a *oandolite*, a small lizard capable of changing colors. A person mounted by Aganman sometimes climbs trees or posts. Some Haitians contend that a person possessed by this loa will change color, from dark to light. [787]

Agasu. In Dahomey, according to Herskovits, Agasu is the name of the panther fetish.[19] Dahomeans regard this deity as of special significance to the royal family. He was remembered among Negroes in Louisiana under the name Agoussou. [171]

Agasu Yemain. Related to Agasu.

Dadal. Among the Yoruba, Dadal was a brother of Ogoun and Chango, and was a patron of vegetables.[20]

Attisolé, also known as St. Soleil. Persons mounted as a result of exposure to the sun are thought to be possessed by this loa. The association of Attisolé with the sun may be a syncretism. [787]

Aughsaut

Aza. A loa who likes the Juba dance.

[17] [Ellis, The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa, p. 68. Cf. p. 354, Category 116.--Analyst]

[18] [Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples, pp. 79-80, Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116.--Analyst]

[19] [Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 165ff. Ellis, The Ewe-Speaking Peoples, p. 83, says that this deity was especially important in the [illegible] of Dahomey. Cf. p. 354, category 116.--Analyst]

[20] [Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples, pp. 45, 76. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116.--An.]

776 **Simbi Wangol**
Simbi Yenpaka
Simbi Larouzé (The Dew Simbi)
Simbi Devant Bondieu (Simbi Before God)
Simbi Trois Fé (Simbi Three Leaves—the name of a pouin)
Simbi Trois Racines (Simbi Three Roots—the name of a pouin)

THE IBO AND KANGA PANTHEONS

Caplãou. A Kanga loa. His name appears to be a survival of the Capläou tribe. Some persons feel he is a member of the Pétro group.

Ibo Foula. An Ibo loa. Note that both Ibo and Foula are tribal designations.

Ibo Mariani, or Mariané. An Ibo loa.

Ibo Héquoiké. An Ibo loa.

[782] **Ibo Jérouge** (Ibo Red Eyes). A malevolent spirit. Food offerings to her consist mainly of pigs and cocks.

Ibo Lazile. An Ibo loa. The food offering to this loa is a goat.

Ibo Lélé, or Ianman Ibo. An Ibo loa.

[787] **Kanga.** A Kanga loa. A "hard" or "stern" spirit, thought by some people to be the same as Capläou. Persons mounted by him play with fire and eat hot peppers.

Kanga Trois. A Kanga loa.

Legba Ibo. The Ibo form of the Vodoun Legba.

Mardi Kama, or Ibo Kama. An Ibo loa.

Marie Louise. An Ibo loa.

Nèglèsse Ibo. An Ibo loa.

Ibo Suament. An Ibo loa.

Ibo Wanème. An Ibo loa.

Nomination. An Ibo loa.

Toument. An Ibo loa.

Barak. An Ibo loa.

Un Pied Un Main Un Jé (One Foot, One Hand, One Eye). An Ibo loa.

Akoupi. An Ibo loa.

De L'Air. An Ibo loa.

Papa Zao. A Kanga loa.

Zao Langé. A Kanga loa.

Kanga Langa. A Kanga loa.

Ça Ou Mangé Con Ça (What Do You Eat Like That). An Ibo loa.

Takwa, or Saint Akwa. An Ibo loa. When he comes in he speaks "unknown" languages.

THE CONGO AND PÊTRO PANTHEONS

Malt' Grand Bois (Master of the Woods). In Congo rites this loa is regarded as one of the most important of deities, holding a place equivalent to that of Damballa in the Dahomé service. When he "comes in" he makes a great din and racket.

Femme Grand Bois. The wife of Malt' Grand Bois.

[The Congo and Pétro Pantheons]

776

Wangol (King of Angola). He also appears in other rites.

Yaombé, or **Mayaombé**. This name is a tribal designation, referring to the Mayaombés of the Congo region.

Wangol Dleau (Wangol of the Water)

Moundongue. Often considered to be a "hard" loa. Ritual service to him includes, on special occasions, the cutting off of dogs' ears and tails. He is fond of dogs and is benevolent toward them. The name derives from that of a tribe of the upper Congo region. [782]

Ti Moundongue. Said to be a "son" of Moundongue.

Moundongue Mousaille. A member of Moundongue's family.

Baiacou, or **Bèllècou**. A loa identified with the morning star, also called Baiacou. There is also a town in Dahomey by this name.

Ganda, or **Baganda**, also called Nèg' Ganda. A deity taking the name of the Ganda people of Uganda.

Congo Yamingan. A benevolent loa associated with curing and protecting the sick. Certain curative medicine bundles are called *yamingans*. [755]

Macaya Bumba, sometimes called Caya. He takes his name from the Bumba people of the upper Congo River region. The Bumbas are near neighbors of the Moundongues.

Manyo Bumba. One of the Bumba family.

Mariani Moundongue. One of the Moundongue family.

Roi Loangue (King of Loango). Refers to the old African kingdom of that name.

Nanchou. A warrior deity.

Avélékété. Known primarily in northern Haiti. [784]

Dan Pétro. A rather malevolent loa, from whom the Pétro cult takes its name. The mangé for Dan Pétro is a pig. Early observers speculated that Dan Pétro was originally a powerful houngan of prerevolutionary days.[23] [782] [773]

Ayida Pétro. A Pétro version of the Vodoun Ayida Wèdo.

Bakulu Baka, known in some regions by the name Pinga Maza. He is a malevolent spirit who "eats"—i.e., destroys—people. Some informants are inclined to believe that Bakulu and Pinga are separate loa, both of a variety akin to baka or démons.

Bakulu Barak. Related to Bakulu Baka.

Bambarra Taiba. He is visualized as a sea crab. *Taille bas* in Creole means "low hips" and is used to describe a dance posture. The surname Taiba therefore may describe the movements of this loa as he moves about like a crab. [192]

Bolisi Bolisa

Brisé Général, or **Général Brisé**. He is enormously large and ferocious in appearance. A special loa of the country people. Although stern, he is fond of children. He is symbolized as an owl; his home is in the chardette tree. His physical description suggests that he may be a deification of the epic folklore character Brise Montaigne, or Break Mountains.

Changanan

Congo Jérouge (Congo Red Eyes). A malevolent male spirit. Loa with red eyes are always of bad character.

Congo Mapionne, or **Mapionole**. A malevolent spirit.

Congo Savane, or **Congo Zandor** (Congo of the Plains). Malevolent, fierce, and

[23] [Saint-Méry, De la dance, p. 48. Cf p. 354, Cat. 11C. --Analyst]

(*Evo évo* is ritual language. Hounsi kanzo are the servitors of the hounfor being addressed by an unidentified loa.) 533 539 [198] [794]

Example 136

Achadé, oh, oh!
Achadé, I have no mother here to speak for me!
Achadé, oh!
Achadé, I have no mother here to speak for me!
Oh Achadé, oh!
Ogoun is bad, oh!
Achadé Papa!
Ogoun is bad, oh!
Etc.

(The song is addressed to the loa Achadé; it complains of the behavior of another loa, Ogoun.) [982]

Example 137

Beat the drum for me!
I shall . . . , beat the drum for me!
Etc.
Three times after the Angelus, oh!
Three times after the Angelus, oh!

(This appears to be a children's game song. Three "times" after the Angelus would be three hours after six o'clock in the evening.) [524]

Example 138

Liberist fell down!
Liberist fell down! *Adié!*
I am sending a whip for his back!
Etc.

(A children's game song.)

Example 139

Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo Aloko, my Loko, Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo Aloko, my Loko, Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo my Loko, Adaïzo!
Etc.

(This is a song of supplication to the loa Loko. The word *miyenvalo* signifies supplication.) [982]

Example 140

Ten cents is not a dollar,
Cousin, don't take cousin, oh, cousin!

(A song for the loa Osange. Literally, the song specifies Osange "in the water," but the sense is "under the water," where the loa reside. 533 539 [192]

EXAMPLE 148

Yabofé my dear, they don't need me!
I will see [enter through] the center post if they *djagwé!*
Yabofé my dear, they don't need me!
I will see the center post if they *djagwé!*
Ferei doesn't see me any more!
I will see the center post if they *djagwé!*

(Yabofé and Ferei are the names of loa. Even though addressed as "Yabofé my dear," it is Yabofé who is speaking. If one thinks of it as "Dear Yabofé says," the shifting point of view becomes less confusing. The term *djagwé* indicates a kind of tension and excitement which builds up before possessions take place. Yabofé says that if the people *djagwé* he is prepared to enter through the center post.) [776]

EXAMPLE 149

Take me (to go), oh!
To the house, oh!

EXAMPLE 150

Damballa! Damballa!
Damballa Wèdo Damballa!
Damballa, *enhé!*
Sacred Damballa! Damballa!

(The song is an invocation to the loa Damballa. The word *enhé* is exclamatory.) [782] [192]

EXAMPLE 151

Ibo Lélé, oh!

(Ibo Lélé is the name of a loa.)

EXAMPLE 152

We thread our way [like a snake],
Damballa Wèdo is a snake, oh!

(The "threading" is a description of conventionalized dance movements suggesting the crawling of a snake. The loa Damballa is identified as a snake.) [535] [776]

EXAMPLE 153

Loko Siadé asks for wind, é!

CHAPTER 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors (pp. 41–74)*

[1] Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the *prêt savane*. 000

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165.

[3] Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti*.

[4] Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro.

[5] Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.

[6] Account given by Voluska Saintvil. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 69): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man dare fell one for a canoe he must and invariably does sacrifice to its spirit and apologizes for the harm he is about to do it."

[534]
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[796]
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[7] The rite of *rafraîchi tête* is conducted periodically for a *maît' tête* after the original *lavé tête* ceremony. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his residence in the head of the devotee.

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[796]
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[8] Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 233.

[9] It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form.

[10] Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voudoun Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 264.

CHAPTER 6: *Songs of the Peristyle (pp. 75–94)*

[1] This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 689):

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796.
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I have no mother there,
I have no father there,
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there.

CHAPTER 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts (pp. 95–104)*

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[1] Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 97.

[2] Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as *mojo*, or "voodoo" charm.

[3] Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 503.

[776]
[789]
[787]

[4] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

CHAPTER 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jugglers, Maypoles, and Kings (pp. 105–109)*

[1] Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 42.

[2] Marionettes of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a phallic marionette, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan.

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CHAPTER 9: *Land and Work (pp. 110–121)*

[1] Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 362.

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 300 ff., describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and

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2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112-W]

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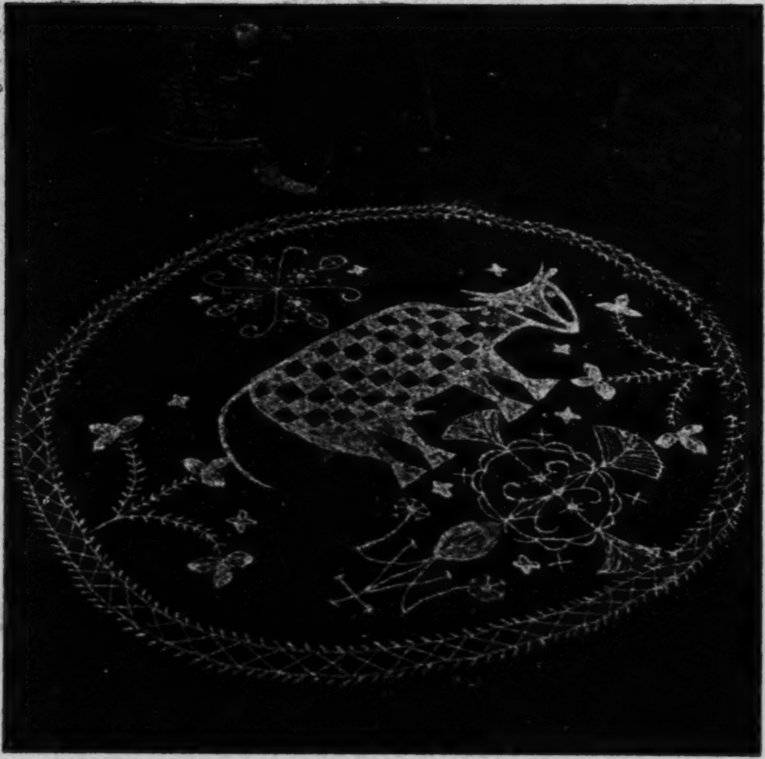
532
776



32. *Maize-flour drawing, or vèvè, for the loa Simbi.*

114

175 have explained it chiefly by the surprise element of the uprising. But
669 when else in modern history have slaves successfully revolted against
668 their armed masters and become permanently free? Successful revolutions even of people not in bodily slavery have had acknowledged
leadership, whereas in Haiti no real leader appeared for the insurgents.
Boukman's influence, indeed, at its widest never reached beyond a
part of the northern plain; he had about the same range of power as a
[793] ward boss in the United States. On the plantations Hallaou, Hyacinthe, Lafortune, and others whose names are unimportant or unknown, Vodun houngans likewise welded slave opinion within their
narrow districts. But no single great leader appeared. As the conflict
was developed, without plan or unity under the divided and contradictory action of numerous blacks, what held the people together
was, negatively, their hatred of the white masters; positively, their
Vodun beliefs. Only later in the decade did a true leader, Toussaint
L'Ouverture, emerge to consolidate their victory.

776 As often happens among unsophisticated people convinced of the
793 rightness of their cause, the local Vodun leaders were sure of their
761 own invulnerability through the protection of one or another of the
782 spirits.[8] They convinced their followers as well, to such a degree that
781 when an invulnerable chief fell there were dozens of reasons to
explain the unexpected death rather than any disillusion. Usually,
failure to follow the rigorous propitiation requirements of the protecting god offered the key to the misfortune. Various ones of them
were known to be exacting and troublesome. The leader at Trou-Coffi, Romaine by name, had absorbed enough of the Roman
Catholicism in Vodun to feel that the Virgin Mary was his especial
[789] patroness.[9] Beyond this specific belief in invulnerability was the
general trust that Vodun spirits would lead their devotees to success,
would give them a happy issue out of all their distress.

[171] [781] 8. A parallel case of belief in invulnerability because of divine protection was that of the North American Indians both at the time of Tecumseh and later in the Sioux outbreaks at the climax of the Ghost-Dance Religion. See James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892–93 [Washington, 1896]), chap. X.

[114] [781] 9. The importance of Vodun beliefs in connection with the slave revolt is stressed by Dr. J.-C. Dorsainvil, *Vodou et Névrose* (Port-au-Prince, 1931), pp. 33–34. He says of many of the chiefs: "The belief in their invulnerability was not at all the result of calculation, but was a true state of mind, a sort of autosuggestion which explains very well the chronic heroism of certain leaders of the revolution in Saint-Domingue and of the war of independence of 1802–3."

787 proper control, as they should be. If an unwanted god persists in
114 mounting an individual, the pertinacious one is commanded to go away or the victim himself is sent home until he can recover his own personality. Many people strongly resist possession when it is imminent. Judged by our own standards, possession of the Vodun variety could certainly not be called normal; judged by Haitian standards, however, it would be absurd to call abnormal an experience known and approved by the majority of the community.[29]

796 Possession occurs either at the service or at the dance. Here again
535 the white man has nothing in his religious experience to enable him
787 to comprehend the pattern of Haitian religion. The service corresponds nearly enough to the Catholic Mass or to more realistic sacrifices in ancient Jewish rites, but neither of these faiths nor any other the white man knows well has dancing for religion's sake. In Vodun, however, the dance is of equal importance with the service.

778 In the tiny *houmfort* (also spelled *hounfort*) of the priest, which is
346 little more than a hut with earthen floor, the service begins. To call
796 this structure a temple is at once to make it too imposing and to confuse the white man in his attempt to understand the scene; it is no more of a temple than was a tiny primitive early Christian church. Most houmforts in Haiti would be crowded if twenty people were present. At one end is an altar, more or less resembling the high altar in a Catholic chapel; on it are placed a crucifix, flowers, candles, fruit and food, wine, lithographs of Catholic saints, and whatever other objects, Catholic or Vodun, local practice may dictate and individual taste prefer. Upon the floor are traced formal cabalistic patterns, generally in corn meal, both to fend off evil influences and as required by the particular loa. The officiants may be male or female or both. To the service ordinarily come only the members of the family and their specifically invited guests; neighbors and friends will attend the subsequent dance.

796 A student of Catholicism would find in the first part of the service
788 a great deal of ritual borrowed from the Church. The blessing,
177 genuflections, making the sign of the cross, responses, and the like,
● 782 all clearly show a Catholic background which accords well with
787 certain objects upon the altar. Imperceptibly the strictly Vodun element obtrudes itself. The loa are asked whether they will accept

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[29] The statement of the two sides of this controversy may be found in Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, throughout; and in Herskovits, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 146-147.

the sacrifices; food is set before the sacrificial animal, and if this food 796
is eaten by the creature or creatures, it is known that the loa is satis- 782
fied. Then comes the actual sacrifice of the animal, a slaying neither 787
ostentatious nor dramatic, since often it does not occur in the houm- 788
fort itself. It is at this juncture that possession is looked for. The loa,
by seizing one or more of his devotees—or, if possession fails, by the 177
divination of the priest—makes known his desires. The demands of
the loa are likely to be modest: a candle, a special article of food,
certain specific attentions. Occasionally he insists upon an impressive
sacrifice. Whatever his desires, they must be gratified or else the loa
will mildly harass the family; long refusal will produce anger and
full vengeance. If the god is Rada, his sacrifice will be white, red, or
vari-colored; if he is Pétro, he will wish black or gray animals—
chickens, turkeys, goats, bullocks.

The service itself, then, is entirely religious in nature, consisting
wholly of ceremonies and rituals conducted by officiating priests,
with the purpose of restraining or pacifying gods who may have
been pursuing a family with misfortune, or gratifying those who
have made it happy. The dance following the service apparently 796
expresses the joy of the family at dangers averted and gratitude for 535
blessings bestowed. [782]

In contrast to the private character of the service, the dance has all
the appearance of a social event. Invitations to it are sent all over the
countryside. People attend for good fellowship, gossip, and the sheer
delight of dancing, but in the background one is always aware of a
religious element as well. The dance is held in a specially constructed [346]
tonnelle, a roof of boughs and leaves supported by uprights. Drums [534]
are not always used at the earlier service, but no dance could be held
without them. The crowd drifts in slowly, so that the dance may be
long in getting under way. The best drummers in the community
may not arrive until after two or three hours. Three drums of
different sizes, all properly baptized, set the rhythms, and sometimes
gourd rattles embroider a commentary upon the beat. Whereas at 796
the service possession comes as a result of the priest's invocations, at 535
the dance it is inspired by the drumming. Each loa has his own 787
particular rhythm, so that as soon as it is determined what god has
seized upon a dancer the drummers take up the rhythm of that god.
The officiant immediately rushes to the mounted person with a
calabash of water and a candle; by following the "horse" around and

796 steadying his attention, he practically hypnotizes him back into full
535 consciousness. As soon as the possessed is normal again, water out of
787 the calabash is poured at the central post and a sign of the cross is made with the candle before it.

796 Contrary to the expectation of thrill-seeking white visitors, the
535 Vodun dance does not merit the name of an orgy. True, the dancers
786 wear their old clothes, for they are going to have violent exercise; true also, those who are possessed give the impression of losing some of their inhibitions. But the dancers do not embrace each other as at a white man's dance; the drinking which occurs is hardly ever excessive; and the climax of a successful dance is a religious experience.
[831] The Haitian is no more obsessed by sex than is the American; indeed, living simply and without many of the artificial restraints of "civilization," he is probably less so. What white visitors sometimes see, under the impression that they are witnessing a Vodun dance, is nothing more than a secular Saturday night social dance. It, too, has drum rhythms instead of an orchestra, musical instruments being rare in Haiti; but the dance has no more religious (or "Voodoo") significance than a barn dance in the United States.

771 Creed and practice go hand in hand in Haiti. The Vodun wor-
776 shiper believes in the loa of his faith and does the things necessary to get in touch with them. These conceptions are the major part of his creed, as the corresponding actions form the bulk of his religious activity.

171 A few articles of the creed remain. "I believe in respect to twins . . ." Hundreds of so-called primitive peoples see in twins some special
845 significance, now fortunate, now tragic. Many of the tribes along the
787 Atlantic coast of Africa thought of twins as an omen, so that the presence of ritual regard for them in Haiti is hardly surprising. It is probably incorrect to speak of the worship, or the cult, of twins, for they are not deified, nor is there a common ritual for them: thousands of persons pay them no homage whatever. One family has a high regard for twins because it has numbered them among its ancestors or recent relatives; another family pays respect to all twins because a priest has advised seeking the good luck which comes from *marassa* (twins). There seems to be some confusion of thought about
● [782] this aspect of religion: twins are not gods, but merely omens from the gods; yet sacrifices are made to them. Christmas and harvest are the usual seasons for the offering. Food is prepared in the morning

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

and set apart on special plates in a separate room for them; in the 171
afternoon the family eats the food. If the twins to whom homage is 845
being offered are still alive, they must wear special clothes at the 787
sacrifice. [782]

"I believe in the careful cult of the dead . . ." Once more it is 761
necessary to renew one's acquaintance with primitive and folk belief
to grasp the Haitian attitude. Life is desirable, death is dreaded; both
death and the dead are feared. In the actual world, any excursion
from the comfortably familiar countryside of one's home leads to
confusion and bewilderment. Except in the company of his fellows [166]
(on a religious pilgrimage to the waterfalls at Ville-Bonheur, for
example), a Haitian almost never leaves his valley or mountainside
and market town. Sophisticated people view the unknown with [181]
pleasurable excitement, for they have learned by experience that the
unfamiliar is not necessarily frightful; it is quite the contrary with
simple folk, whose meagre experience with the unfamiliar has been
at least somewhat alarming.

Death is the ultimate unknown. The fearsomeness the imagination conceives to lie beyond death seems to exist in almost direct proportion to people's ignorance of the material world. The fear of ghosts is a commonplace among primitive folk, as among the uneducated in the "civilized" world. Where ghosts are considered powerful, one part of any comprehensive cult will certainly deal with the dead.

In Haitian Vodun the teachings of the Catholic Church have 769
exerted more influence upon the cult of the dead than upon any other 177
part of the religion. The preparation of the corpse for burial shows
no traces of African practice; the watch (or wake) and wailing over [764]
the deceased is familiar; the funeral itself is conducted by a Catholic
priest, with burial in consecrated ground. Thereafter, the continual
efforts to secure the tranquil repose of the departed bear the earmarks
of faithful Catholic practice; it is at this point, however, that the cult
begins to assume distinctive features, for it is firmly believed that the
dead exert tremendous power in the world of the living. This power
comes from God—the Christian God. The case has been put suc-
cinctly by Sumner and Keller: "The relation between man and 114
ghost resolves itself . . . into a relation of rights and duties, with all 116
the rights on one side and all the duties on the other."[30] God gives 769

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[30] W. G. Sumner and A. G. Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, 1927), II, 829.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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776 the dead a right to whatever their survivors possess, and moreover
769 gives them the right to return to earth as ghosts.[31]

769 Strict rules of mourning prevail, both as regards clothing and behavior.
The slightest lapse in the observation of these rules would
765 cause resentment on the part of the dead; fear of retribution would
775 be quite enough to ensure conformity even if public opinion did not.
782 Ghosts have the power to possess mortals, not as the loa do at a
Vodun service or dance, but in the manner understood by American Negroes who say they have been "ha'nted," and so, continually thinking of the dead, live in nervous fear of a streak of bad luck. Such possession is a form of persecution, with continual consequent bad luck until the survivor has carried out all his obligations. It is especially significant, however, that a departed spirit takes vengeance only in matters thought by the Haitian to concern the Church. The ghost is not whimsical in his possession of mortals, and cannot resent treatment which is his due. The kind of treatment given a corpse depends upon the kind of death he died: a person struck by lightning, for example, would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God.

787 Where the cult of the dead departs entirely from the teachings of
775 the Church is in the matter of magic, a topic shortly to be treated. It
789 may be briefly stated here that ghosts can be summoned back by
special adepts for purposes of divination; that certain corpses are thought to be revivified by evil persons who use these soulless, pathetic automata as slaves (these are the notorious *zombis*); and that black magic—that is, powerful influence for evil—can be worked by sorcerers who know how to command ghosts.

771 All other articles of the Vodun creed not already discussed, except
one, come under the heading of magic. That exception is the statement:
788 "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The fact is as simple
as the affirmation. If the Catholic priests fight Vodun, preaching frequently against its beliefs and practices, that is unfortunate, think the peasants: Vodun does not retaliate by fighting Catholicism. God and the saints have their province, and the loa theirs. The mind of the Haitian is simple enough to accept both sets of spiritual beings, and not philosophical enough to worry over the contradiction. Practically every Vodun worshiper thinks of himself as a Catholic.[32]

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[31] See Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

[32] In this sketch of the Vodun creed, it has been constantly emphasized that each locality has its own variations both in belief and practice. The reader who is interested in pursuing the subject further should consult the works of Price-Mars, Herskovits, Dorsainvil, Parsons, Hurston, et al. See Bibliography.

4. *Magic*

771 It is difficult enough to make a distinction between religion and superstition; it is practically impossible, in dealing with a people who in their closeness to nature are not accustomed to the refinements of "civilized" thinking, to make one between magic and certain aspects of religion. Underlying both is belief in the supernatural; characteristic of both is a faith which recognizes a higher order of cause and effect operating with the lower one familiar in commonplace matters. Anthropologists hold various theories about magic, some saying that it is the set of practices out of which religion evolved, others that it exists for personal and practical ends and has little to do with religion; still others that it is a development out of religion, paralleling and complementing it.[35]

771 One element which distinguishes religious practice from magic is
789 the attitude toward spirits. In religion, the worshiper pays homage
782 and humbly petitions, preserving meanwhile an attitude of humility to spirits or gods who must be propitiated; in magic, the human being, by coercive words and actions, commands the services of spirits who (if the magical rites have been properly performed) must obey. The distinction is not between good and evil, for a god may have both characteristics and be entirely capable of working harm to mortals. As already noted, in the Haitian system the gods are like men in being mixtures of both principles.

771 Another difference between religion and magic concerns time.
789 Religion is social, open to all worshipers or at least to all of a group or social rank. Its rites are continually and repeatedly performed.
791/2 Magic, on the contrary, though sometimes public and social, is generally private and, since it is for a specific purpose, is performed only when the need arises. A man who was thoroughly conversant with magic might go through his whole life without ever feeling the need of employing it or having to exert himself to fend it off. One turns to magic as a sophisticated man might turn to medicine. Either may be done without; both may be used to excess.

789 In Haitian Vodun, magic interweaves itself with the general faith.

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793 [35] See, for example, Ruth Benedict, "Magic," in *Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences*, X, 39–44; A. Goldenweiser, *Early Civilization* (New York, 1922), chaps. X–XI; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1907–15), *passim*; R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (New York, 1914), *passim*; and Sumner and Keller, *op. cit.*, II, chaps. XXIX–XXXI.